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LIGHTS AND VISIONS IN *RDZOGS CHEN* THINKING
VOL. I

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and four hundred
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Abstract

The principal topic of this dissertation is the *Rdzogs chen* doctrine of a kind of fundamental Intelligence which is supposed to be the ground for both, samsara and nirvana. This ground is said to be an inseparable union of primordial purity and spontaneous perfection. Whereas its primordial purity is defined as empty of any qualifications, its spontaneous perfection is a luminous potentiality which arises as whatsoever. This arising occurs by means of Four Lamps and is a projection of the Inner empty and luminous Space of the ground into Outer Space (*phyi'i dbyings*). How it arises and how it finally dissolves back into its Inner Space (*nang dbyings*), is explained as consisting of Four Visions.

A short but comprehensive account of this projection and of the view of the *Rdzogs chen* doctrine in general is contained in "The Eleven Themes" by *Klong chen rab 'byams* (1308-1364) which serves as basis for a detailed description of Intelligence and its multifarious reality of lamps or lights and visions as understood in *Rdzogs chen* thinking.

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Author's declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree. The views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author and do not represent those of the University of Bristol. The dissertation has not been presented to any other University for examination either in the United Kingdom or abroad.

SIGNED: *W.A. Schneider* DATE: *10 March 2004*

Table of contents

Introduction	p. 1
The First Theme	p. 22
The Second Theme	p. 38
The Third Theme	p. 57
The Fourth Theme	p. 66
The Fifth Theme	p. 74
The Sixth Theme	p. 88
The Seventh Theme	p. 153
The Eighth Theme	p. 160
The Ninth Theme	p. 238
The Tenth Theme	p. 241
The Eleventh Theme	p. 266
Notes	p. 275
Glossary	p. 411
Abbreviations	p. 427
Bibliography	p. 431
Appendix I: The <i>Tshig don bcu gcig pa</i>	p. 450
Appendix II: The <i>Sgron ma 'bar ba'i rgyud</i>	p. 479
Appendix III: The thirteenth chapter of the <i>TCZ</i>	p. 492
Appendix IV: Index of the <i>TTT</i> 54 / 55 / 56	p. 519

Introduction

First of all, the fundamental aspects of *Rdzogs chen* thinking have to be explained. Without a certain knowledge of this thinking, the lights - or more literally: the lamps (*sgron ma*), and the visions (*snang ba*)¹ as presented in the text “The Eleven Themes” (*Tshig don bcu gcig pa*) of *Klong chen rab 'byams* (1308-1364) remain incomprehensible.

As it is the case with all soteriological systems of Tibetan Buddhism, *Rdzogs chen* too, can be divided into ground, way, and result. It is a kind of fundamental Intelligence (*rig pa*) which is supposed to constitute the ground for both, samsara and nirvana. The ground (*gzhi*)² is non-dual, there being no ultimate difference between opposites such as samsara and nirvana. It cannot be expressed in words and it is basically indeterminate. It is called “ground” because it is *as it is* since ever, and therefore, it can neither be constructed nor be destroyed by whatsoever.

Moreover, the fundamental Intelligence (*rig pa*) which constitutes the ground (*gzhi*) and which is already present before the arising of Buddhas (*sangs rgyas*) and sentient beings (*sems can*) has many names such as “Youthful-Vase-Body” (*gzhon nu bum pa'i sku*), “Spontaneously Perfect Precious Sphere” (*lhun grub rin po che'i sbubs*), “Primordial Lord Unchanging Light” (*gdod ma'i mgon po 'od mi 'gyur ba*), etc. Each of these names sheds light on different qualities of the ground such as its ever lasting youthfulness, its primordiality, or its luminosity.

Discussions of only partially correct views about the ground (*gzhi*)⁴ can be found in many relevant texts. All of these views are said to be erroneous in the sense of assuming the ground to be either exclusively determinate or completely indeterminate. In reality, the ground cannot be pinpointed to be existent or non-existent as whatsoever, being beyond such conceptual limitations.

Nevertheless, it is possible to circumscribe the fundamentally intelligent ground in a way that avoids the pitfalls of claiming it to be something or to be nothing. This is done by defining it as having three aspects, namely essence (*ngo bo*), nature (*rang bzhin*), and compassion (*thugs rje*).

The first aspect, its essence (*ngo bo*), represents primordial purity (*ka dag*) which is understood as being empty (*stong pa*). The term “being empty” means in this context that the fundamental Intelligence is devoid of any fictive way of existence such as inherent existence. Not only that, Intelligence (*rig pa*) is also free of all grosser levels of consciousness which are subsumed under the term “mind” (*sems*).

According to *Rdzogs chen* thinking, mind has to be clearly differentiated from Intelligence⁵. The first one is a kind of intentionality which is highly selective, thus giving rise to the duality of subject and object. Intelligence, on the other hand, is qualified as primordially pure which means that it is a kind of non-conceptual cognitive charge being present before the coming forth of mind. In other words, mind is a kind of low-level manifestation of Intelligence.

Moreover, it is worth mentioning that eight of the nine gradually arranged soteriological means or vehicles (*theg pa*

dgu) of the Old School of Tibetan Buddhism (*Rnying ma*) are viewed upon as “made by mind”⁶. Only the ninth, i.e., *Rdzogs chen*, is said to be based on Intelligence what explains why it is assumed to be fundamentally superior to the other eight vehicles.

The second aspect, its nature (*rang bzhin*), is spontaneously perfect (*lhun grub*) in possessing the potential to arise or “to make itself clear” (*gsal ba*) as light. It emphasizes the point that the ground is not merely empty, but that it is ready to manifest itself in its totality which in the following can be experienced either as a variety of Buddha-Fields or samsaric levels of existence.

Compassion (*thugs rje*), its third aspect, refers to the all-pervasive (*kun khyab*) responsiveness of the ground and highlights the inseparability of its essence and nature, a quality of the ground which cannot be overemphasized.

To be sure, to translate *thugs rje* as “compassion” is not unproblematic⁷ even when understood as a kind of higher compassion owned by a Buddha, because *thugs rje* refers in this context to the ground which is *a priori* present before the emergence of a Buddha (*sangs rgyas*) or a sentient being (*sems can*). Nevertheless, I prefer to translate this term rather literally, because however one translates it, one still has to circumscribe it in order to make it fully comprehensible.

The essence” (*ngo bo*) of the ground could also be termed “facticity”, thus emphasizing its mere being. Its mere being, however, is nowhere else to be found than in its nature (*rang bzhin*), which reflects its potential for actualizing or presencing itself. Compassion (*thugs rje*), finally, refers to its capacity to trigger a meaningful response to itself.

It is in the verge of the actual arising of the ground as light that its basic indeterminacy finds its end. On account of the mere recognition of this light as appearance of the ground itself (*rang snang*) nirvana is established. The failure to do so, however, is what is meant with “ignorance” (*ma rig pa*), and it is on account of it that light turns into increasingly material samsaric levels. Nevertheless, the coming forth of ignorance has to be understood as a merely incidental occurrence, there being no inherent fault or sin involved⁷.

After having briefly discussed the mode of being of the ground of *Rdzogs chen*, some words about its way (*lam*)⁸ should be said. As one can easily imagine, the way implies a kind of reversal or undoing of ignorance. It is usually subsumed under the topics of Cutting Through (*khregs chod*) and Leaping Over (*thod rgal*)⁹ by means of which the Intelligence of the ground is laid open. The former one aims at cutting through the whole of conceptual thought. This is done by relying on a meditative procedure featuring self-liberation (*rang grol*). Thus, in the practice of the Cutting Through (*khregs chod*), “self-liberation” means that no intentional effort is involved to undo ignorance and the ensuing duality of concepts such as samsara and nirvana or subject and object. Duality is looked upon as illusory, and illusion itself is not understood as something having a kind of enduring substance, which implies that illusion itself is illusory.

In this context,, the term “look upon” (*lta ba*) is to be taken quite literally, because the self-liberation of illusion actually is realized by looking at whatever one is aware of in a non-interfering manner - the German word *Gelassenheit* fits well here -, thereby releasing the dualistic tension inherent in any

moment of consciousness governed by a rigidly fixed subject-object structure. In this process the primordial purity (*ka dag*) of the ground of Intelligence is laid open, but its spontaneous perfection (*lhun grub*) as witnessed in immediate perception is not thematized. The aspect of spontaneous perfection is, however, dealt with in the Leaping Over (*thod rgal*). In this practice Intelligence (*rig pa*) is caused to project itself in and as outer appearances, thus facilitating a visionary experience of it; and it is primarily this facility of the Leaping Over which is said to mark it as being superior to the Cutting Through¹⁰.

Another superiority of the Leaping Over concerns the result ('*bras bu*) as understood in *Rdzogs chen* thinking. Even though both practices are said to be identical in having the potential to cause final liberation or Buddhahood by means of giving access to the primordial purity of the ground, nevertheless, it still is only by means of the Leaping Over that one realizes the body of light ('*od lus*)¹¹ which implies the dissolution of one's material body into light.

After these few introductory remarks about the main features of the ground, the way, and the result of *Rdzogs chen* the principal topic of this work can now be outlined in preciser terms: Even though the primordial purity (*ka dag*) of the fundamental Intelligence of the ground will be elucidated to a certain degree, the assessment of its spontaneously perfect (*lhun grub*) arisal will be placed in the foreground.

Lights, or more literally, lamps (*sgron ma*), is one of the two key terms used in the Leaping Over. It is by means of the lamps that the ground arises in and as outer appearances.

Certainly, the main characteristic of what is named “lamp” can be circumscribed as “inseparability of clarity and emptiness” (*gsal stong dbyer med*)¹². Thus, it is that which makes itself clear (*gsal ba*) - i.e., that which actualizes itself in and as visionary experience of form, colour, sound, etc., - without losing its quality of being empty of any concreteness¹³. In other words, it is the inseparability of the empty essence (*ngo bo stong pa*) and the clear nature (*rang bzhin gsal ba*) of the ground in and as all-pervading compassion (*thugs rje kun khyab*) as it manifests outwardly in visionary experience.

Of course, the term “manifest outwardly” (*phyi snang*) should not be taken too literally, rather, it should be understood as a projection of the “inner” luminosity (*nang gsal*) of the ground into the seemingly Outer Space (*phyi'i dbyings*). Useful in this context is the picture of the Youthful-Vase-Body (*gzhon nu bum pa'i sku*). When the outer wall of this body which symbolizes the ground in its “inner” potentiality, is broken through, its “inner” light is seen in the “Outer Space”. Obviously, the term “Outer Space” (*phyi'i dbyings*) does not refer to some kind of “science-fiction like outer space”, but means that the ground is making room for itself in and as experienceable *plenum*.

Moreover, the term “lamp” (*sgron ma*) also implies a bodily presence. It is the ground present in the concrete givenness of an individual being and thus, it is similar to the *tathāgatagarbha*¹⁴ of the general *Mahāyāna* Buddhism.

In the *Rdzogs chen* literature exists a wide variety of different sets of lamps, because of the multivalence of this term¹⁵. Nevertheless, a quite common set consisting of Six Lamps

(*sgron ma drug*) seems to be the most suitable one to elucidate both, the ground as it is present in the body as the inner light of man and the ground's projection as it is experienced in and as Outer Space:

1. The Lamp of the Abiding Ground (*gnas pa gzhi'i sgron ma*) corresponds to the essence, nature, and compassion of the ground and is very often equated with the *tathāgatagarbha*.
2. The *Tsitta* Lamp of Flesh (*tsitta sha'i sgron ma*) indicates not so much the mere fact of the presence of the ground in the body as does the first lamp, but rather its specific place in the body, i.e., the heart (*tsitta*).
3. The Lamp of the Channel Which is White and Smooth (*dkar 'jam rtsa'i sgron ma*) is a light-channel or rather a network of light-channels (*'od rtsa*) which functions as a path leading the inner light of man to the eyes. These channels are unique to *Rdzogs chen* and should not be confused with the channels (*rtsa*) as presented in many tantric texts.
4. The Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a Distance (*rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma*) refers to the eyes, i.e., to their subtle facility to serve as a door for the arising of the inner light of man into Outer Space (*phyi'i dbyings*).
5. The Lamp of the Time of the Intermediate State (*bar do dus kyi sgron ma*) denotes the Intermediate State of Reality Itself (*chos nyid kyi bar do*) where the ground manifests itself

as peaceful and wrathful Buddha-Fields. It highlights the close relationship existing between the visions arising through the application of the Leaping Over (*thod rgal*) and the visions supposed to appear in the Intermediate State of Reality Itself (*chos nyid kyi bar do*). In other words, it is assumed that the Leaping Over opens up the way to experience right away what usually is only experienced after death, thus creating the possibility to attain Buddhahood in this very lifetime.

6. The Lamp of the Ultimate Result (*mthar thug 'bras bu'i sgron ma*) refers to the Intelligence (*rig pa*) dwelling again in the ground after the dissolution of its self-appearance (*rang snang*). “Ultimate” (*mthar thug*) means that the result, i.e., Buddhahood which is attained after the recognition of its appearance as self-appearance is beyond change.

Relating the Six Lamps (*sgron ma drug*) to the three phases of ground, way and result, one has to count the first four lamps as ground, the fifth as way, and the sixth as result¹⁶.

As for the Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a Distance: It is also contained in a fourfold set that one could call the “standard or overall *Rdzogs chen* version of lamps”¹⁷, because it is the one most frequently met with in *Rdzogs chen* texts. Actually, this is also the set that is presented in the text “The Eleven Themes” (*Tshig don bcu gcig pa*):

1. The Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a Distance (*rgyang zhag chu'i sgron ma*) which provides - as mentioned above - the door for the arising of the three other lamps.

2. The Lamp of Utterly Pure Space (*dbyings rnam par dag pa'i sgron ma*) presents itself as Outer Space, i.e., as space of projection for the two following lamps, and as such it is perceptible as dark blue appearance in the sky.
3. The Lamp of Empty Drops of Light (*thig le stong pa'i sgron ma*) comes forth inside the second lamp in the shape of coloured light-drops (*thig le*) which join together to form groups and which steadily become bigger in size.
4. The Lamp of Self-Arisen Discriminative Awareness (*shes rab rang byung gi sgron ma*) is not actually lighting up as appearance but is an awareness that retains the non-duality of what arises in the phase of the self-appearance of the ground (*rang snang*) and itself, thus implementing the view of the Cutting Through (*khregs chod*) in the context of the Leaping Over (*thod rgal*).

One might wonder in which kind of *Rdzogs chen* texts the term “lamp” (*sgron ma*) is used. I went through the whole *Rdzogs chen* section of The Hundred Thousand Tantras of the Old School (*Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*) of the *TTT* ¹⁸ which includes many Tantras of all of the Three Series (*sde gsum*) ¹⁹ of *Rdzogs chen* and a few treasure texts (*gter ma*) ²⁰ belonging to the third series, i.e., the Instruction Series (*man ngag sde*), and I also had a close look at the Four Branches of the Heart Essence (*Snying thig ya bzhi*) ²¹ which incorporates exclusively treasure texts belonging to the Instruction Series, but as a term denoting the actual projection of the inner light of

man into Outer Space (*phyi'i dbyings*) it can - as far as I know - only be found in texts of the Instruction Series.

Of course, it is met with in the two other series, i.e., in the Mind Series (*sems sde*) and the Space Series (*klong sde*), but there it seems to be understood in a rather symbolic way. Thus, in some of the texts of these two series the term “lamp” (*sgron ma*) denotes the enlightened mind (*byang chub sems*) or Pristine Cognition (*ye shes*) which - similar to a lamp - banishes the darkness of ignorance.

After this elucidation of the lamps by means of which the ground arises, some words should be said about *how* it actually arises. This leads us to the second key term employed in the visionary context of the Leaping Over, namely the “Four Visions” (*snang ba bzhi*). The term “Vision” (*snang ba*) denotes both, how the ground arises as well as how it dissolves back into itself, and even though it is explained that it consists of four gradual levels, it should not be assumed that these levels arise necessarily in the order described below.

Moreover, they do not arise out of the ground on account of intentional imagining, but manifest spontaneously in the Outer Space (*phyi'i dbyings*) in the same way as a face naturally reflects itself in a mirror.

1. The Vision of the Immediate Perception of Reality Itself (*chos nyid mngon sum gyi snang ba*):

The term “immediate perception” (*mngon sum*) indicates in the context of the Leaping Over that one *perceives* what is meant with the reality of Intelligence (*rig pa*) by applying specific meditative techniques. It is emphatically denied that

these visions have any similarity with common appearances because it is assumed that unlike the latter ones they are not something that can be reduced to the material-physical.

As mentioned above, these uncommon visions (*snang ba*) appear by means of the lamps (*sgron ma*). As door or gate for the outward arising of Intelligence serves the Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a Distance (*rgyang zhag chu'i sgron ma*), i.e., a kind of light-channel (*'od rtsa*) dwelling in the middle of the eyes, and by means of the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space (*dbyings rnam par dag pa'i sgron ma*) the first of these Four Visions (*snang ba bzhi*) initially lights up like a dark-blue space with a circumference of rainbow-light.

Subsequently, the Vajra-Chains (*rdo rje lu gu rgyud*) which resemble strings of pearls or diamonds come forth inside the Lamp of Empty Drops of Light (*thig le stong pa'i sgron ma*) which arises in the form of five-coloured light-drops (*thig le*) in the middle of the dark-blue appearance of space. The Lamp of Self-Arisen Discriminative Awareness (*shes rab rang byung gi sgron ma*), finally, makes itself felt after the stabilization of the visions of the Vajra-Chains as an awareness which takes hold of these visions in a non-conceptual way.

2. The Vision of Increasing Experiences (*nyams gong 'phel gyi snang ba*):

During the second vision the light-drops (*thig le*) increase in size and number, and the Vajra-Chains (*rdo rje lu gu rgyud*) inside them multiply. Not only that, this vision is also characterised by the coming forth of multifarious kinds of

luminous forms such as shooting stars, checkered designs or lotus flowers with thousand petals. In the most advanced stage of this vision the rainbow-like light pervades the Outer Space (*phy'i dbyings*) completely and inside countless light-drops manifest the partly developed Buddha-Bodies of the Five Families (*rigs Inga*)²².

What is translated in this context as “experiences” (*nyams*) refers to both, mental (*shes nyams*) and visual experiences (*snang nyams*). The former ones are understood as meditative signs such as bliss, clarity or non-discursiveness (*bde gsal mi rtog gsum*) corresponding to the feeling-tone experienced during the unfolding of the Four Visions (*snang ba bzhi*). Being transitional they are said to be imperfect.

However, it is the quality of making the ground experienceable in visionary perception which represents the hall mark of the Leaping Over (*thod rgal*). Thus, the visual experiences (*snang nyams*) are much more appreciated and even looked upon as perfect, because one is supposed to see the reality of Intelligence in all its immediacy by means of them.

3. The Vision of the Intelligence Reaching Its Peak (*rig pa tshad phebs kyi snang ba*):

It is in the penultimate vision that Intelligence (*rig pa*) reaches its peak in its outward projection. The Buddha-Bodies (*sku*) of the Five Buddha-Families (*rigs Inga*) manifest here in their fully perfected form. Concrete things such as earth or stones cease to appear and the material body begins to dissolve into light.

4. The Vision of Exhaustion of Reality Itself (*chos nyid zad pa'i snang ba*):

This vision does not imply some kind of nihilism in the sense of becoming nothing. Rather both, the arising of visions culminating in the third vision as well as their final exhaustion or dissolution are prerequisite to gain access to perfect Buddhahood which should not be looked at as a kind of static perfection, but as the beginning of a new dynamic regime.

Directly related to this regime are two kinds of attainment (*thob pa gnyis*). The first one, i.e., the power over birth (*skye ba la dbang thob pa*) is the power to incarnate whenever and in whatever form in order to lead sentient beings (*sems can*) towards Buddhahood. The second one, i.e., the power over entrance (*'jug pa la dbang thob pa*) denotes the dissolution of the body one has manifested into the primordial purity of the ground when there is no longer any need for it.

These two attainments are said to be experienced by means of the so called body of light (*'od lus*) which seems to be a rather controversial issue in Tibetan Buddhism. There have even been critics who insisted that the dissolution of the material body into light has nothing to do with Buddhism²³.

Moreover, the assumption that the perfection of the Four Visions (*snang ba bzhi*) is attained after the dissolution of the material body and of all other appearances into the primordial purity of the ground raises the question about the relationship of the primordial purity at the level of the ground which implies ever present enlightenment or liberation (*ye grol*) to the primordial purity present at the level of the result.

Obviously, the basic *Rdzogs chen* doctrine that primordial purity (*ka dag*) remains as it is throughout is difficult to understand if the ground and the result are assumed to be different.

On the other hand, it does not make any sense to walk on a spiritual way if these two levels are looked at as identical, because in this case liberation from samsara would already have been attained.

A possible solution to this dilemma seems to lie in an understanding of what is meant with “spontaneous perfection” (*lhun grub*) which highlights the potential of the ground to manifest as both, samsara and nirvana.

Thus, according to *Rdzogs chen* thinking, samsara and nirvana mark the end of its basic indeterminacy, the latter one being accomplished by means of one’s recognition of its actual arisal as self-arisal or self-appearance (*rang snang*) and the former one being established on account of ignoring it as such.

The presence or absence of ignorance (*ma rig pa*), however, does not alter primordial purity (*ka dag*) itself and therefore primordial purity is said to be similar to the sky which does not undergo any change even when it is covered by clouds.

Consequently, it is not appropriate to assume any difference between the primordial purity as present at the two levels of the ground and the result. Rather, the point to understand is that even though primordial purity remains the same throughout, nevertheless, it only *functions* as such at the resultant level after having been uncovered on account of recognizing it for what it is.

Now, as for the question concerning which texts give explicit information relating to the Four Visions (*snang ba bzhi*), it should be noted that all of them seem to belong to the Instruction Series (*man ngag sde*). Not only that, an examination of the *TTT* clearly shows that the Instruction Series certainly incorporates many *Rdzogs chen* texts with allusions to them, but that very few of these texts actually explain them in detail.

Looking at the Four Branches of the Heart Essence (*Syning thig ya bzhi*) the situation concerning the Four Visions (*snang ba bzhi*) is completely different, because one finds in this collection of treasure texts (*gter ma*) of the Instruction Series various texts - see the Eighth Theme - which elucidate the Four Visions (*snang ba bzhi*) from many different points of view. This fact leads to the conclusion that the theme of the Four Visions is primarily met with in treasure texts of the Instruction Series.

As mentioned in the beginning of this introduction, the text “The Eleven Themes” (*tshig don bcu gcig pa*) which is translated here for the first time in its full length, serves as basis for the explanation of what is meant by “lights” or “lamps” (*sgron ma*) and “visions” (*snang ba*).

First of all, some words about its author²⁴ should be said. Undoubtedly, the all-knowing *Klong chen rab 'byams* has been the most important thinker of the *Rnying ma* School.

He was born in the *Gyo ru* region of Central Tibet in 1308 as son of *Bstan pa srung*, a descendant of one of the “Seven Chosen Ones” (*sad mi bdun*) who became the first Tibetans to be ordained by the Indian *pandita Śāntarakṣita* in the end of the eighth century. Not only that, one of his mother's

ancestors, i.e., '*Brom gza' ma bsod nams rgyan*, was a famous disciple of *Atīśa* (982-1054), the founder of the *Bka' dam pa* order.

Moreover, he was looked upon as an incarnation of Princess *Padma gsal* (eighth century) who had obtained *Snying thig* teachings directly from Padmasambhava. In the following, these teachings - they are known nowadays as *Mkha' 'gro snying thig* - are said to have been hidden as a treasure (*gter ma*) and finally to have been rediscovered in the thirteenth century by *Padma las 'brel rtsal*, the incarnation of *Padma gsal* who was directly preceding her incarnation as *Klong chen rab 'byams* .

At the age of twelve *Klong chen rab 'byams* was admitted at *Bsam yas*, the first monastic institution established in Tibet (eighth century) and was given the name *Tshul khrims blo gros*²⁵, a name he used later when he was writing on mainly mundane subjects such as poetry, metre, etc.

The following years he visited many different monastic institutions in order to enhance his studies which included not only texts belonging to the Old School (*Rnying ma*), but also texts which have been looked at as authoritative by the *Sa skya* and *Bka' brgyud* order of the New Schools (*Gsar ma*)²⁶.

Nevertheless, the main monastery he was staying at during his early twenties was the *Gsang phu* monastery in Eastern Tibet which has been founded by *Rngog legs pa'i shes rab*, a student of *Atīśa*.

At twenty-seven he met *Rig 'dzin Kumārāja* (1266-1343) who was the transmission-holder of the *Bi ma snying thig* , i.e., the *Snying thig* teachings of *Vimalamitra*. Beside this collection of *Snying thig* he received all teachings relating to the Three

Series (*sde gsum*) of *Rdzogs chen* from him. Staying in retreat at sacred places such as *Mchims phu* of *Bsam yas*, he practised during several years what he had been taught by *Rig 'dzin Kumārāja*.

In his early thirties he gained access to the *Snying thig* texts transmitted by Padmasambhava and subsequently he was given the transmission of it by Padmasambhava and his consort *Ye shes mtsho rgyal*. Having personal contact with them during visions the names *Dri med 'od zer* and *Rdo rje gzhi brjid* were conferred upon him by Padmasambhava and *Ye shes mtsho rgyal*, respectively. Later on, he signed works treating both, Outer and Inner Tantras with *Dri med 'od zer*, and in the context of works discussing difficult subjects relating to the graduations of the spiritual or soteriological vehicles (*theg pa*) he used the name *Rdo rje gzhi brjid* ²⁷.

Following these visionary encounters he settled down in *O rgyan rdzongs*, a hermitage at *Gangs ri thod dkar* (Central Tibet) where he stayed most of the time of the rest of his life.

In this hermitage he wrote more or less all of his two hundred and seventy works many of which are still extant today. Among them are his highly important commentaries on the *Mkha' 'gro snying thig* and the *Bi ma snying thig*²⁸, as well as his famed Seven Treasures (*Mdzod bdun*)²⁹.

He not only was a prolific writer, but also was enthusiastic about the restoration of ancient temples. Thus, in his early forties he succeeded in reconstructing the *Zhva padma dbang chen* temple in *Dbu ru* (Central Tibet) where *Myang ting nge 'dzin bzang po* (ninth century), the founder of this temple, is said to have concealed the *Bi ma snying thig* and where it had

been rediscovered in the eleventh century by *Ldang ma lhun gyis rgyal mtshan*.

In his early fifties he had to go to Bhutan into exile, because 'Bri khung kun rig, one of his students, was opposing *Tai si tu byang chub rgyal mtshan*, the then newly reigning lord of Tibet who erroneously considered *Klong chen rab 'byams*, too, as an enemy. After his reconciliation with *Tai si tu byang chub rgyal mtshan* he was allowed to return to Tibet where he died in the year 1364 at the age of fifty-eight in *Gangs ri thod dkar* as a highly revered person.

Now, with regard to the text "The Eleven Themes" (*Tshig don bcu gcig pa*), it has to be mentioned that one is dealing with a short but nevertheless comprehensive text. It is contained in the fourth volume of the *Bi ma snying thig* which again forms part of the Four Branches of the Heart Essence (*Snying thig ya bzhi*). As its name suggests, it deals with eleven main topics arranged into Eleven Themes:

1. "The essential condition of the ground in the time preceding the presence of Buddhas realizing it and of sentient beings failing to do so" presents a list of the Eleven Themes treated in this text as well as a concise explanation of the three aspects of the ground, i.e., of its essence (*ngo bo*), its nature (*rang bzhin*), and its compassion (*thugs rje*). Moreover, it is stated that this text is not meant for individuals preferring a rather gradual approach towards Buddhahood by means of studying philosophical tenets, but for those who are ready to realize it directly through practice.

2. “The assessment of the origin of delusion in the ground (*gzhi*) as defined in the First Theme” deals with its arising as samsara on account of ignoring its appearance as self-appearance (*rang snang*). Ignorance itself consists of three aspects being closely related to the three aspects of the ground and it is accompanied by four conditions which support this process of going astray into samsaric delusion.
3. “The presence of the core or seed of perfect Buddhahood in sentient beings (*sems can*) despite the already arisen delusion” treats the different modalities of such a presence. Thus, it is explained that this seed dwells as Five Buddha Families (*rigs Inga*), as Five Buddha-Bodies (*sku Inga*), etc.
4. “The precise location of the seed or essence of perfect Buddhahood” elucidates the Precious Palace of the Heart (*tsitta rin po che'i gzhal yas khang*) which is said to be located in the middle of the heart. There, the essence of this seed dwells as Buddha-Body, its nature as light, and its compassion as Intelligence.
5. “The way taken by Pristine Cognition” gives an outline of the formation of the body. It is argued that one has to learn first about the definite characteristics of the body in order to understand the light-channels (*'od rtsa*) which are based on the body and which constitute the way taken by Pristine Cognition (*ye shes*).

6. “The doors by means of which Pristine Cognition arises” explains the place where Pristine Cognition parts from the body in order to manifest itself outwardly. It is said to be the eyes, or more precisely, the Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a Distance (*rgyang zhag chu'i sgron ma*), a subtle light-channel dwelling in the eye.
7. “The place where Pristine Cognition appears” treats the Inner Space (*nang dbyings*) of the Precious Palace of the Heart as it is projected in and as Outer Space (*phyi'i dbyings*). Moreover, “Space” (*dbyings*) is considered in this context as being inseparably united with Pristine Cognition (*ye shes*).
8. “The practice” sketches out two ways of how to meditate, one emphasizing a rather conceptual and the other a non-conceptual, i.e., a direct approach. The first one consists of Four Yogas (*rnal 'byor bzhi*) and the second one has as its two parts the Cutting Through (*khregs chod*) and the Leaping Over (*thod rgal*). It is in the context of the latter one that the Four Visions (*snang ba bzhi*) are dealt with.
9. “The marks of progress in practice” gives indications about how body, speech, and mind are felt in the wake of meditative progress. Moreover, as for Intelligence (*rig pa*), the two marks of Intelligence itself and of its self-appearance are distinguished.
10. “The arising of the intermediate State of Reality Itself in the time following death after having failed to practise during life” presents first an outline of the Four Intermediate States

(*bar do bzhi*) and then focuses on the Intermediate State of Reality Itself (*chos nyid kyi bar do*) which is described as the experience of a multitude of luminous forms.

11. “The great liberation” ascertains the result, i.e., Buddhahood which is understood as an inseparable union of the Inner Space of the Precious Palace of the Heart and its projection into the Outer Space with the Intermediate Space of the Four Lamps (*sgron ma bzhi*).

Being rather short, the text “The Eleven Themes” (*Tshig don bcu gcig pa*) helps us not to lose the overall view. On the other hand, many questions concerning its eleven topics remain unanswered on account of its brevity. Therefore, other texts stemming from The Four Branches of the Heart Essence (*Snying thig ya bzhi*), The Hundred Thousand Tantras of the Old School (*Rnying ma rgyud ‘bum*), and The Seven Treasures (*Mdzod bdun*) have been consulted in order to gain a precise understanding of its content. Last but not least, it has to be mentioned that it was absolutely necessary to consult Tibetan *Rdzogs chen* adepts, because the salient aspects of *Rdzogs chen* thinking have been exclusively transmitted “from mouth to ear” from ancient times until now.

The First Theme

The essential condition of the ground in the time preceding the presence of Buddhas realizing it and of sentient beings failing to do so

“With body, speech, and mind I pay homage to the Great Glorious *Vajradhara*, to the *Guru*, the *Deva*, and the *Ḍākinī* who are the cause of bliss coming forth.

Thus, the teacher Samantabhadra (*Kun tu bzang po*), the Perfect Buddha whose compassion is great and whose means are skilful, appeared out of the Clear Light of the *dharmakāya* (*chos sku*) in the form of the *sambhogakāya* (*longs sku*) with its major and minor marks (*mtshan dang dpe byad*).

There are different kinds of beings to be tamed, but here Eleven Themes (*tshig don bcu gcig*) (are explained) in order to let a fortunate individual realize Buddhahood.

The First Theme (explains) the essential condition of the ground in the time preceding the presence of Buddhas realizing it and of sentient beings failing to do so.

The Second Theme assesses the origin of delusion in the ground as defined in the First Theme.

The Third Theme (elucidates) the presence of the core

or seed of perfect Buddhahood in sentient beings
despite the already arisen delusion.

The Fourth Theme (deals with) the precise location of
the seed or essence of perfect Buddhahood.

The Fifth Theme (treats) the way taken by Pristine
Cognition.

The Sixth Theme (specifies) the doors by means of
which Pristine Cognition arises.

The Seventh Theme (describes) the place where
Pristine Cognition appears.

The Eighth Theme (gives an outline of) the practice.

The Ninth Theme (clarifies) the marks of progress in
practice.

The Tenth Theme (delineates) the arising of the
Intermediate State of the Nature of Reality in the
time following death after having failed to practise
during life.

The Eleventh Theme (defines) the great liberation.

Now, as for the First Theme: In the general *Rdzogs*
chen system, (one distinguishes) adepts of
philosophical tenets (*rdzogs pa chen po'i lugs kyi*
grub mtha'i rjes su 'brangs pa) and adepts of
its practice (*lam rjes su'dzin pa'i gang zag*).

From among these two, (this text is meant) for the latter
one.

Thus, the original ground (*thog ma'i gzhi*) is present as
essence (*ngo bo*), nature (*rang bzhin*) and
compassion (*thugs rje*).

Its essence is empty, its nature clear and its
compassion unobstructed.

Its essence is present as Buddha-Body (*sku*), its nature as Buddha-Speech (*gsung*), and its compassion as Buddha-Mind (*thugs*).

Its essence is present as Buddha-Body without throne and ornaments, its nature lights up in manifold colours, and its compassion is all-pervading (*kun khyab*) as it is present as unobstructed ground for the arising of anything.

As its essence is empty, it falls not in the extreme of eternalism.

Being clear in its nature, it falls not in the extreme of nihilism, and as it pervades all, it falls not in the extreme of being material.

Its essence is not present as error.

So, there is no possibility of its compassion abiding as error.

As its essence is the Buddha-Body, it does not change.

As its nature is light, it is self-clear.

As its compassion is Pristine Cognition, the aspects of knowing are unceasingly clear in their distinctiveness.

Its aspects of knowing are present as the three aspects of the Pristine Cognition abiding in the ground (*gzhi gnas pa'i ye shes gsum*).

Such is the mode of being of the initial ground.”

In the beginning of the text, the author takes refuge (*phyag 'tshal*) in the Great Glorious Vajradhara (*Dpal Idan rdo rje 'chang chen*) and the Three Roots (*rtsa ba gsum*)³⁰.

After that one is told that the *dharmakāya* Samantabhadra (*chos sku kun tu bzang po*) has arisen as sambhogakāya (*longs sku*) with its Major and Minor marks (*mtshan byed*)³¹ in order to transmit this text to sentient beings (*sems can*) with good karma. Furthermore, it is stated that one can attain Perfect Buddhahood (*yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas*) in this life or in the Intermediate States of Death, of Reality, and of Becoming, by following the instructions given in it. Two kinds of *Rdzogs chen* adepts are mentioned, namely the adepts of philosophical tenets and the adepts of its practice. *Klong chen rab 'byams* makes it unmistakably clear that this text is meant for the latter ones.

Altogether seven views or assumptions concerning the ground (*gzhi*) of *Rdzogs chen* are mentioned. Six of them are ascribed to the adepts of philosophical tenets and are considered as only partially correct³²:

1. The assumption that the ground is spontaneously perfect (*gzhi lhun grub tu 'dod pa*),
2. the assumption that it (the ground) is indeterminate (*ma nges par 'dod pa*),
3. the assumption that it is ultimately determinate (*nges pa don du 'dod pa*),
4. the assumption that it is completely changeable (*cir yang bsgyur btub tu 'dod pa*),
5. the assumption that it is acceptable as anything (*gang du'ang khas blangs du rung bar 'dod pa*), and
6. the assumption that it is variegated on account of its many aspects (*rnam pa sna tshogs pas khra bor 'dod pa*).

1. Why are these six assumptions only partially correct?

Let's begin with the assumption that the ground is spontaneously perfect: To consider the ground as something exhibiting deficiency and freedom of deficiency in spontaneous perfection is inconsistent with the primordial purity of it.

Besides, it would not make any sense to walk on the way of meditation. Such a way could not lead towards Buddhahood, because nothing would be attained if deficiency and freedom of deficiency were spontaneously perfect forever.

2. The assumption that it is indeterminate exposes one to the danger of imagining it to be something. Being completely indeterminate, samsara with all its suffering could arise again even after having reached Buddhahood. Such a ground would lead one to everywhere and nowhere.

3. Assuming it to be determinate would exclude any change. How could ignorance, the cause of suffering, be eliminated under such circumstances?

4. The assumption that it is completely changeable would imply that the result of Buddhahood could again turn into its cause.

5. A ground acceptable as anything could not be ultimate, because one would be confronted with innumerable versions of the ground.

6. Also the assumption that it is variegated on account of its many aspects is denied. How could the many aspects of discursive thinking be acknowledged as the primordial ground?

In summary, these six assumptions concerning the ground are similar in one respect: Holding on to them one falls prey to a one-sided perspective of seeing it as something existent or non-existent.

Now, how does the text define the correct view concerning the essential condition of the ground preceding the emergence of the duality of Buddhas and sentient beings? Essence, the first aspect of the original ground (*thog ma'i gzhi*), marks it as initially pure (*ngo bo ka dag*), i.e., as empty of being something determinate with clearly delineated characteristics. Nevertheless, its clear nature (*rang bzhin gsal ba*), the second aspect, is spontaneously perfect (*lhun grub*) in its potentiality of self-appearing as what later on is interpreted as samsara or nirvana. Compassion, the third aspect, emphasizes the unity of the two former aspects and specifies the ground as all-pervading (*thugs rje kun khyab*).

The *Rdzogs chen* presentation of the ground easily raises critical questions: Is it not illogical to assume an initially pure ground being present as innermost being of sentient beings in the face of the fact that they have fallen into samsara? How does it come that they have to purify defilements if their essence has been pure forever? Moreover, why should the result, i.e., final liberation of samsara be obtained after long exertions, if it is already spontaneously perfect at the level of the ground? *Rdzogs chen* does not deny the fall of sentient beings into samsara, but whatever appears is intuited as mere

play of Intelligence (*rig pa'i rtsal*). This play resembles a dream and being ultimately non-existent forever, it is initially pure. The *Rdzogs chen* point of view that Buddhahood is spontaneously perfect does not make it unnecessary to realize it. However, in this process nothing new is created.

Furthermore, realization comes without efforts and often is likened to the awakening out of deep sleep. The following quotation should shed some further light on the mode of being of the ground³³:

“The ground with its three aspects is present as inner
(*nang gsal*), but not as outer, clarity (*phyir gsal*).

It resembles a crystal or a butterlamp in a vessel.

It is inseparably clear and empty.

Embellished with the innermost Intelligence, it is like an
egg of a peacock.”

This quotation supplies us with important technical terms and suggestive images. First, it is stated that the ground before its arising as samsara or nirvana is present as inner clarity. The term “inner clarity” hints at its potentiality and at its atemporally unrestricted availability. Outer clarity is not in opposition to inner clarity, but is the inner clarity of the ground which appears now in and as Space and consequently materializes itself increasingly. The different levels of materialization and the reversal of it shall be elucidated later on in different contexts.

Now, as far as the all-pervading Pristine Cognition of the ground with its three aspects is concerned, it is conceived of as inner clarity and illustrated with a crystal. The stainless purity

and transparency of a crystal suggests its concept-free essence. Furthermore, in the absence of refraction of light, the five lights representing its clear nature do not arise in and as outer clarity, but remain in their potentiality of inner clarity.

Finally, its compassion -abiding as subtle unrestricted Intelligence ready to arise unceasingly - is equated with the inherent lustre of a crystal.

A butterlamp in a vessel pictures the luminosity of the ground as still enclosed in inner clarity, and in order to illustrate the presence of nature and compassion in the initially pure essence of the ground, the picture of an egg of a peacock is given.

The ground before its arising as samsara or nirvana is also defined as “Spontaneously Perfect Precious Sphere” (*lhun grub rin po che'i sbubs*) not yet broken through, hence likened to the Youthful-Vase-Body (*gzhon nu bum pa'i sku*).

“Youthfulness” stands here for the emptiness of the ground, being beyond arising and ceasing, and “Vase-Body” indicates that it is a Space ready to manifest as Buddha-Bodies. In other words, the Youthful-Vase-Body is another picture of the emptiness of the ground which has the potential to manifest, and it has to be noted, that it should not be equated with a vessel containing the Buddha-Bodies. Rather, the Buddha-Bodies are present in the ground in the way butter is present in milk potentially. Nevertheless, the ground is ground of everything and arises in dependance on circumstances as samsara or nirvana. The propriety of the camphor to be beneficial in case of sickness caused by cold and to be harmful in case of sickness caused by heat accurately describes the ambiguity of the ground³⁴:

“In the time before the arising of a Buddha on account of his perfect realization and the arising of sentient beings on account of their lack of realization, there is the presence of the Space of Reality (*chos dbyings*), an empty Space exposing realm resembling the centre of the bright sky.

Furthermore, being bright and unmoving it is also similar to the depth of the ocean, and being clear and unobstructed it bears likeness to the surface of a mirror.

There, in the Sphere of Reality (*chos nyid kyi klong na*) abides the core, i.e. the fundamental Intelligence (*gzhi 'dzin pa'i rig pa*), as essence, nature, and compassion.

Like camphor, being neither marked off as samsara or nirvana, it is unobstructed in arising as both.

Even though its essence cannot be delineated, it differentiates itself on account of circumstances (*rkyen*).

In the ground are neither negative nor positive qualities.

However, its mere being the ground of arising of whatever one wishes is the great originary place of all which itself is like the Wish-Fulfilling Gem (*yid bzhin nor bu*).”

The phrase “there, in the Space of Reality abides the core, i.e., the fundamental Intelligence, as essence, nature, and compassion” raises the question about the relationship between Intelligence (*rig pa*) and Pristine Cognition (*ye shes*)³⁵:

“The essence of Pristine Cognition is a non-conceptual consciousness endowed with the self-radiation of the Five Inherent Lights (*rang 'od Inga*) which holds onto the nirvanic aspect (of the ground).

Furthermore, the essence of Pristine Cognition is an Intelligence free of remembering and conceptuality (*dran rtog dang bral ba*).

It is defined as Pristine Cognition, because it knows the meaning (of nirvana). It is classified into a fundamental Pristine Cognition, namely essence, nature, and compassion, into a Pristine Cognition with five attributes, and into a twofold Pristine Cognition of (all) knowables (*shes bya'i ye shes gnyis*).

It is a consciousness which knows the primordial meaning (*ye yi don*), the ground as it is.

Therefore it is called “Pristine Cognition.”

The relationship between Intelligence and Pristine Cognition could be described as follows: Intelligence is a non-conceptual consciousness which expresses itself as different aspects of Pristine Cognition on account of its realization of the nirvanic aspect of the ground. Consequently, Pristine Cognition is not merely non-conceptual, but a kind of radiation possessing the potential to arise as the Five Lights of outer clarity.

In this context, the white light stands for the Mirror-Like Pristine Cognition (*me long lta bu'i ye shes*), the yellow one for the Pristine Cognition of Equality (*mnyam nyid kyi ye shes*), the red one for the Discriminating Pristine Cognition (*so sor rtog pa'i ye shes*), the green one for the Accomplishing Pristine Cognition (*bya ba grub pa'i ye shes*)

and the blue one for the Pristine Cognition of the Space of Reality (*chos dbyings kyi ye shes*). By realizing the five lights of outer clarity as self-appearance of the ground, the nirvanic aspect of it is understood. On the other hand, not being aware of them as self-appearance is the cause of their condensation into the Five Elementary Forces (*'byung ba lnga*) of samsara. But how are the Five Lights present at the time of the ground preceeding their arising in outer clarity³⁶?

“As far as the initial pure essence (of the ground) is concerned, nothing can be established.

Therefore it is not determined as having a definite pattern (*ris can*) such as the lights and colours of Buddha-Bodies found in outer clarity.

Nonetheless, its primordial radiation (*ye gdangs*) appears in the Space of spontaneously perfect nature as identity of exceedingly subtle appearances of Five Lights, Buddha-Bodies, rays (*zer*) and drops of light (*thig le*).

Swirling in (and as) this Space, it abides as Pristine Cognition of inner clarity.”

Having clarified the relation between Intelligence and Pristine Cognition, the question arises what is meant by conceptuality or conceptual thought (*rtog pa*). According to *Rdzogs chen* it is mind (*sems*) which functions as conceptual thought and which has to be distinguished from the nature of mind (*sems nyid*). As should be clear now, Intelligence is not something added to the ground, but the ground itself which in its availability of being something conscious is called “nature of

mind". As such it is present before the arising of Pristine Cognition or conceptual thought. Its non-conceptual radiation is Pristine Cognition, spontaneously perfect as Buddha-Realms. Mind, however, initiates deceiving conceptuality and is experienced as painful samsaric existence³⁷:

"The essence of mind is samsara as such,(the duality of) the apprehender and the apprehended.

Its potential (*rtsal*) is the apprehender of objects and (the succeeding) attachment to them as belonging to oneself.

Its action consists of the production of various samsaric pleasures and pains and its result manifests as endlessness of samsara and evil forms of existence (*ngan song*)."

The ground as such is intelligent and its split into apprehender and apprehended (*gzung 'dzin*) only ensues from the ignorance (*ma rig pa*) of its initial arising. Having nothing in common with a static entity, it is a self-manifesting process called "singularity" (*thig le nyag gcig*), defined as the emptiness of the ground in its radiation as self-projecting lighting-up of its unchanging mode of being³⁸:

"The essence of Self-Intelligence (*rang rig*) is emptiness and the radiation of emptiness is clarity in its unobstructedness.

In spite of its clarity, there is no way of establishing it as a duality (of emptiness and clarity), because its essence is the singularity.

On account of the constancy of the ground, one calls the essence of the singularity “circle” (*thig*).

Being unconfined and unrestricted (*rgya chad phyogs lhung med pa*), one calls it “moment” (*le*).

As its nature can not be established, one calls it “tiny” (*nyag*) in view of its subtlety.

As there is nothing which is not contained within it, one calls it singular (*gcig*).

It is similar to a root or a seed out of which all of samsara and nirvana spreads.”

In the time before the arising of Buddhas and sentient beings, the ground abides as completely indeterminate inner clarity, symbolized by the Primordial Lord Unchanging Light (*gdod ma'i mgon po 'od mi 'gyur ba*). The anthropomorphic representation of the ground as Primordial Lord Unchanging Light indicates that it abides in the heart of sentient beings. “Primordial” as it is, it stays there forever. Moreover, one specifies it as “Unchanging Light”, because of its presence as Three Buddha-Bodies (*sku gsum*)³⁹:

“Initial purity and spontaneous perfection abide in the ground as inseparableness of appearance and emptiness (*snang stong*).

It is the inner clarity free of dullness and confusion (*ma bying ma rmongs*) (present) in the middle of the Sphere of the Five Lights of Intelligence.

Not yet having radiated out, it abides as Vase-Body.

At this time nothing is determinated (and as such) it is

called by terms like “original general ground” (*thog ma'i spyi gzhi*), “Primordial Lord Unchanging Light”, or “great ancestor” (*mes chen*).”

The technical terms “Primordial Lord Unchanging Light” (*gdod ma'i mgon po 'od mi 'gyur ba*) or “Original Buddha Unchanging Light” (*thog ma'i sangs rgyas 'od mi 'gyur ba*), “The All-Good-One” (Samantabhadra / *Kun tu bzang po*) and “Youthful-Vase-Body” (*gzhon nu bum pa'i sku*) are identical insofar as they are metaphorical expressions describing the ground⁴⁰:

“The essence (of the ground) is stainless, and the great self-radiation (*rang gdangs*) of (its) Pristine Cognition is unceasingly clear.

It precedes all (other Buddhas) and is endowed with self-appearance of Intelligence (*rig pa rang snang*).

Therefore, (it is called) “ Original Buddha Unchanging Light”.

The diversity of its qualities is appearing as anything, but in the essence (of the ground) they cannot be distinguished and so all (of its qualities) (are present as) the One Taste (*ro gcig pa*) in its great non-duality.

Therefore, (it is called) “The All-Good-One” (Samantabhadra / *Kun tu bzang po*).

Out of the self-radiation of clear reality itself arises the radiation of pure Pristine Cognition in form of rays (*zer gdangs*).

In this palace of unceasing light, the core, i.e., the Five

Buddha-Bodies, (is present in) inner clarity.

Therefore, (it is called) “Vase-Body”.

And because it is free of old age, (it is called) “Youthful”.

To sum up, while dealing with many rather difficult terms used to describe the primordial ground or the (fundamental) intelligence one should never forget that according to *Rdzogs chen* the main point is direct experience of what is meant by it. How would a *Rdzogs chen* master point out its three main aspects, namely essence, nature, and compassion, to a disciple? Obviously, exemplifying it with a crystal comes in handy⁴¹:

“The primordial nature of mind, the self-arisen Pristine Cognition itself, abides as essence, nature and compassion.

(This) Intelligence is shown to be concept-free and empty in its essence.

Therefore, it is similar to a crystal having the qualities of brightness, stainlessness and transparency (*zang thal ba*).

(Without concomitant circumstances), the Five Lights (of a crystal) are not present in outer clarity, but they abide inside in spontaneous perfection.

Likewise, the nature is present in the range of Intelligence as unceasing light in spontaneous perfection.

Therefore, the nature is shown to be clear.

Similar to a crystal being inseparably (*dbyer med*) bright and pure (*dkar po*), compassion is shown to

arise unceasingly (as inseparable unity of essence and nature).

Although these three qualities (of a crystal) can be distinguished, ultimately, in their essence, they are not different.

Likewise, the Intelligence being empty, clear and unceasing, is shown to be an inseparable unity of essence, nature, and compassion.”

The Second Theme

The assessment of the origin of delusion in the ground as defined in the First Theme

Up to this point, the text has treated the mode of being of the ground before its arising as samsara and nirvana. The Second Theme now elucidates how it actually comes forth as samsara on account of the three aspects of ignorance (*ma rig gsum*). But its initial stirring, the first moments of the inner light transforming itself into the outer one, are not treated in the text. Neither is the mode of (nirvanic) liberation of Samantabhadra (*Kun tu bzang po'i grol tsul*) dealt with, because the text explicitly is intended as a manual for adepts of *Rdzogs chen* practice (*lam rjes su 'dzin pa'i gang zag*). Consequently, information concerning aspects of rather theoretical concern such as the ones mentioned above have to be drawn from other sources.

The whole process of the self-appearance (*rang snang*) begins with a first phase within inner clarity, called “Spontaneously Perfect Precious Sphere” (*lhun grub rin po che'i sbubs*) followed by a second phase, circumscribed by terms such as “the Spontaneously Perfect Appearance” (*lhun grub kyi snang ba*) or “the abiding in the outwardly clear appearance of the light-sphere of Pristine Cognition” (*ye shes 'od kyi sbubs phyir gsal gyi snang ba la gnas pa*)⁴²:

“Out of the Precious Spontaneous Perfection (of) the inner clarity (of) the primordial ground, compassion moves (as) Pristine Cognition of Intelligence (*rig pa'i ye shes*) in its rudimentary knowing (*rig tsam*) (driven by) the wind of life-force and its four branches which becomes the power of (its) discriminative awareness⁴³.

Thereby (compassion) arises outwardly together with the lustre of the spontaneously perfect inner nature.

At this time (there is) the so called “abiding in the outwardly clear appearance of the light-sphere of Pristine Cognition” (which arises) after the manifestation of the inner clarity of the Spontaneously Perfect Precious Sphere (with its) presencing of (compassion and nature) as Buddha-Body and Pristine Cognition in the sphere of the empty essence.

Even though the outwardly arising aspect of active compassion does not (yet) proliferate as discursive thought, it moves away from the ground on account of which it is called “lame Intelligence”.

Moreover, this appearance is called “borderline of light and darkness”, because it manifests out of the primordial mode of being in outer clarity, but is presencing (itself) in a intermediate phase lacking the error of a sentient being (caused by) ignorance.”

The term “borderline of light and darkness” (*mun snang gnyis kyi mtshams*) illustrates clearly the still undetermined being of the now outwardly appearing ground being available

as such on account of its immediately preceding transformation into the Spontaneously Perfect Precious Sphere, a sphere still resting in inner clarity. Neither realized as self-appearance by the Buddha Samantabhadra nor ignored as such by sentient beings, the subsequent transformation is called “abiding in the outwardly clear appearance of the light-sphere of Pristine Cognition”. The outwardly arising aspect of compassion is termed “lame Intelligence”, because it initiates the movement away from the ground which implies the danger of going astray into samsara. Another passage in the text quoted above brings into prominence the cognitive aspect of the first stirring of the ground⁴⁴:

“From (the point of view of) the indestructible *vajra* (*rdo rje*) which I am, there is no outer frame of reference (*dmigs pa*).

(However,) the inwardly present intention (*yid*) (now) moves and begins to think (*rig rig*) on account of which (the outer arising of the ground) is set in motion by means of the wind (*rlung*) (which originates) from the causal inseparability (of the aspects of the ground).

Out of the seed of one-pointed non-conceptuality the propelling Pristine Cognition (*'phen pa'i ye shes*) itself is generated.

(Thus, the ground) enters the womb which is a borderline of light and darkness.”

The role played by the propelling Pristine Cognition and the wind is elucidated in the following quotation⁴⁵:

“Out of the range which is an abiding with one-pointed non-conceptuality in the intrinsic reality (*rang bzhin*) of the essence, nature, and compassion of the primordial mode (representing) the primordial mode of being in its great initial purity and its inner clarity, all aspects of the Spontaneously Perfect Appearance of the Ground (*gzhi snang lhun grub*) arise.

Moreover, this propelling Pristine Cognition, being compassion itself, abides in the range of the Clear Light (*'od gsal*) (of) the Spontaneously Perfect Ground as extremely subtle and impartial discriminative awareness (of) the inner clarity of Pristine Cognition of Intelligence (*rig pa'i ye shes*) or as embodiment of the core (*snying po'i bdag nyid can*).

(Abiding as such) the upward-moving (wind) (*gyen du rgyu*) (functions as) horse of discriminative awareness, the downward-clearing (wind) (*thur du sel*) as (inner) glow of the rays of discriminative awareness, the fire accompanying (wind) (*me mnyam*) (as) carrier of the strength of ripening, and the pervading (wind) (*khyab byed*) (as) carrier of the strength of completion.

The nature of the five winds, four of them being branches (of the main one), is such that they dwell in their function of being the core or the ground of

arising of the totality of The Spontaneously Perfect Appearance (*lhun grub kyi snang ba*) as unceasing radiation.”

To sum up, the inwardly present intention is a kind of rudimentary knowing, is compassion itself which begins to move into outer clarity. The technical term for this feature of compassion is “propelling Pristine Cognition”. In its function as subtle discriminative awareness it is forever present in the Clear Light of the ground and with the help of its accompanying wind the outer wall of the Youtful-Vase-Body is finally broken through whereupon a second phase, the so called “Spontaneously Perfect Appearance” (*lhun grub kyi snang ba*) sets in.

This phase marks the actual beginning of the outer arising of the ground and it consists of Four Meditation-Days (*bsam gtan zhag bzhi*), four sub-phases of increasing concreteness in outer clarity⁴⁶:

1. The Spontaneously Perfect Precious Mode of Being (*lhun grub rin po che'i gnas lugs*),
2. the Great Appearance of the Ground (*gzhi snang chen po*),
3. the Appearance of the *sambhogakāya* (*longs sku'i snang ba*), and
4. the Appearance of the *nirmanakāya* (*sprul sku'i snang ba*).

1. The Spontaneously Perfect Precious Mode is also termed “uncertain ground” (*gzhi ma nges pa*), “spontaneous

perfection” (*lhun grub*) or “ground arising as variety” (*gzhi sna tshogs su ‘char ba*), and it exhibits eight aspects, namely Six Modes of Arising (*‘char tshul drug*) and Two Doors (*sgo gnyis*):

1. Arising as compassion (*thugs rje ltar*),
 2. as light (*‘od ltar*),
 3. as Buddha-Bodies (*sku ltar*),
 4. as Pristine Cognition (*ye shes ltar*),
 5. as non-duality (*gnyis med ltar*), and
 6. as liberation from extremes (*mtha’ grol ltar*).
-
1. The door of the complete Buddhahood of Samantabhadra (*Kun tu bzang po mngon par byang chub pa’i sgo*), and
 2. the door of the going astray of sentient beings into samsara (*sems can ‘khor bar ‘khrul pa’i sgo*).

In the following quotation one finds a short but clear explanation of these eight aspects of the Spontaneously Perfect Precious Mode of Being⁴⁷:

“With regard to the Six Modes of Arising: As (the ground) arises as compassion, compassion for sentient beings arises.

As it arises as light, the worlds are pervaded by rays of light.

As it arises as Buddha-Body, all appearances arise as heaps of the Five Buddha-Families (*rigs Inga*).

As it arises as Pristine Cognition, the pure Buddha

realms are clearly visible in immediate perception.

As it arises as non-duality, there is an abiding in a non-discursive absorption.

As it arises as freedom from extremes, there is a momentary abiding in the nature of reality (*chos nyid*).

With regard to The Two Doors: When this appearance of Pristine Cognition is understood as self-appearance, the door of the complete Buddhahood of Samantabhadra in the primordial ground (opens up), and when it is not understood as such, the door of the going astray of sentient beings into samsara (opens up).”

Before investigating The Two Doors in detail the three other sub-phases of the Spontaneously Perfect Appearance shall be discussed briefly in order to have an overview of the whole process of the actual outer arising of the ground.

2. The second sub-phase, termed “the Great Appearance of the Ground” (*gzhi snang chen po*) arises immediately after the conclusion of the first one. It exhibits a variety of rainbow-like appearances such as the Banners of Pristine Cognition (*ye shes kyi snam bu*)⁴⁸:

“Not having recognized the (first) appearance as self-appearance, it comes to an end.

On the second day there is the so called “Great Appearance of the Ground”.

(This) appearance of the Five-Coloured Banners of
Pristine Cognition resembles a stratification of the
rainbow-spectrum in the ten directions.

In(side) it, appearances of Pristine Cognition, which are
embellished with five-coloured heaps, arise
everywhere.

It is also said that some (sentient beings) have attained
liberation in the primordial ground on account of
having recognized this appearance (for what it is)."

3. In the same text we read about the appearance of
the *sambhogakāya* (*longs sku'i snang ba*)⁴⁹:

"Concerning the third one: After the conclusion of the
former one, there is in the third day, the so called
"appearance Of the *sambhogakāya*".

In the all-encompassing appearance of the Clear Light,
heaps of the (Five) male-female Buddha-Families
(*rigs Inga*) shining in their Major and Minor Marks
(*mtshan dang dpe byed*) light up..."

As it were, an explanation of the Five Buddha-Families
(*rigs Inga*), is based here on the view of *Rdzogs chen*
with its emphasis on a fundamental Intelligence (*rig pa*)⁵⁰:

"The appearance of compassion, i.e., the Pristine
Cognition of Intelligence, as totality of (perceptible)
forms is the Body of *Vairocana* (*Rnam par snang
mdzad kyi sku*).

This Pristine Cognition of Intelligence - when not moved by the wind of conceptuality - is the Body of *Akṣobhya* (*Mi bskyod pa rdo rje'i sku*).

The coming of everything needed out of the realization of Intelligence which is like a wishfulfilling gem, is the Body of *Ratnasambhāva* (*Rin chen 'byung ldan gyi sku*).

The unlimited dwelling of this Intelligence in the appearance of boundless light is the Body of *Amitābha* (*Snang ba mtha' yas kyi sku*).

The great self-arising of the play of Intelligence (*rig rtsal*) of unceasing compassion is the Body of *Amoghasiddhi* (*don yod grub pa'i sku*).”

4. The fourth sub-phase, the Appearance of the *nirmaṇakāya* (*sprul sku'i snang ba*), exhibits three levels:

1. The actual *nirmaṇakāya* (*rang bzhin sprul sku*),
2. the Six Sages (*thub pa drug*), and
3. the *nirmaṇakāya* with Various Forms (*sna tshogs sprul pa*).

1. The actual *nirmaṇakāya* consists of the Five Buddha-Families which appear now in their semi-concrete form as teacher of *Bodhisattvas* of the Tenth Level (*sa bcu pa*)⁵¹.

This appearance is termed “semi-concrete”, because it presents itself halfway between the more subtle appearance of the *sambhogakāya* and the two other levels of the *nirmaṇakāya* which are more concrete than it.

2. The Six Sages represent six aspects of Buddha arising in the six samsaric realms of gods, anti-gods, human beings, animals, hungry ghosts and hell-beings as *Brgya byin*, *Thags bzang*, *Shā kya thub pa*, *Seng ge rab brtan*, *Kha 'bar bde ba*, and *A lba glang mgo*, respectively.

3. As the name implies, the *nirmaṇakāya* with various forms stands for an indeterminate variety of possible manifestations of the *nirmaṇakāya*. The following quotation affords a glimpse of this fourth sub-phase of the “Spontaneously Perfect Appearance”⁵²:

“Out of the (appearance of the *sambhogakāya*) (arise) the pure realms (*zhing*) of the Five Buddha-Families (of) the actual *nirmaṇakāya*, namely, ‘*Og min*, *Mngon dga*’, *Rin chen yongs gangs*, *Padma brtsegs*, and *Las rab grub pa*.

There, the teacher, being the Five Buddha-Families, presents himself to his retinues of the Tenth Level in his perfect mirror(like) form during the three times.

The obscurations of the Tenth Level are cleared by means of (his) swirling light-rays.

Thus, he accomplishes the charismatic activity of placing (his retinues on the level) “Light Everywhere”.

This pure realm appears (only) to the assemblage of (his) pure victorious sons.

(Originating) from light-rays emitted from (his) mouth,

Brgya byin, *Thags bzang*, *Shā kya thub pa*, *Seng ge rab brtan*, *Kha 'bar bde ba*, and *A lba glang mgo*

benefit the impure (sentient beings dwelling) in the

worlds of gods, anti-gods, human beings, animals, hungry ghosts and hell-beings in forms adopted to them, thereby (still) relying on the peaceful space (*zhi ba'i dbyings*).

Thus, the *nirmaṇakāya* with various forms accomplishes the charismatic activity of ultimately certain excellence after having effected an abiding in happiness, ease and joy (by means of things) such as skilled craft, birth as living being, ponds, bridges, lotus flowers, wishfulfilling trees, drugs, precious stones and lights.

After the extinction of beings to be tamed the taming (Buddha) dissolves in (peaceful) space.”

After having shortly elucidated the four increasingly concrete sub-phases of the “Spontaneously Perfect Appearance”, it is necessary to return to the point where Samantabhadra (*Kuntu bzang po*) gained liberation and where sentient beings went astray in order to discuss the Second Theme of the *Tshig don bcu gcig pa* , namely ignorance. As we know, the Two Doors related to liberation and ignorance arise in the first sub-phase. Two subsequent moments of realization are required to open the Door of the Complete Buddhahood of Samantabhadra⁵³:

“Out of the presence of the essence, nature, and compassion (of) the primordial ground in inner clarity, the Pristine Cognition of Intelligence has moved with (the help of) the four(fold) life-wind which has provided (its) horse.

Together with the Intelligence (of) compassion, which slightly has arisen outside, the pure realms of the

Buddha-Bodies and Pristine Cognition (originating)

from the nature have lit up like the rising sun.

In a first moment an understanding has arisen, because

compassion has clearly (*lbal gyis*) recognized (this

lighting up) as inner radiation (*mdangs*) arising

outwardly in its self-appearance.

Afterwards, the overestimated nirvanic vision (of)

outwardly clear Buddha-Bodies and (of) appearances

of the Clear Light, and the undervalued vision,

i.e., the door of samsara, possessing the seeds of the

impurely arising ground of the six kinds of sentient

beings, namely “A”, “NRI”, “PRE” “DU”, “SU”, “HRI”,

are naturally purified and neutralized (*rang log*).

Being free of them, the whole of outer clarity has been

inwardly absorbed in a second moment.

Present as great inner clarity which has remained

without change as it has been before, the ground has

ripened into the result.

The result (is) the capture of the stronghold (of the

ground), and like the fruit of the pomegranate tree

(which does not bear seeds), it abides without falling

back into the cause (of error).”

The understanding of Samantabhadra is qualified by three

self-arisen aspects of teaching (*rang byung gi chos gsum*)⁵⁴:

“In short, after having effected a difference of his

understanding in one single moment, the primordial

Samantabhadra attained Buddhahood.

As it is written in the Tantra of the Magical Net

(*Sgyu 'phrul drwa ba*):

The difference effected in one single moment.

Buddhahood perfected in one single moment.

Samantabhadra who has been liberated in this way

possesses three self-arisen aspects of teaching:

The quintessential teaching which has not originated from an oral transmission of teaching (*lung*), the Buddhahood which has not originated from mind (*sems*), and the result which has not originated from a cause.

Concerning the first (aspect): Buddhahood has been attained on account of the self-arisal of self-existing (*rang byung*) realization without a teacher giving an oral transmission.

Concerning the second one: Because of not having gone astray into samsara, enlightenment has been attained by knowing the Self-Liberation of Intelligence which is not (affected by) the Eight Collections (*tshogs brgyad*) together with their all-ground (*kun gzhi*)⁵⁵.

Concerning the third one: Having seen the mode of being of the ground, the three (aspects of) Intelligence have been attained without even a slight accumulation of virtue such as (exemplified by) the Two Collections (*tshogs gnyis*)⁵⁶.

Thus, in the reach of the ground which is as it is, (these three aspects) are in themselves spontaneously perfect forever.”

In this quotation we met with the controversial statement that Samantabhadra (*Kun tu bzang po*) has attained Buddhahood without having accumulated the Two Collections. However, this statement has to be understood in a qualified sense⁵⁷:

“Although (the statement) “Samantabhadra has attained Buddhahood on the ground without even a slight accumulation of virtue” is well known, nevertheless, (it is not exactly correct).

If it is scrutinized, (it becomes evident) that the recognition of one’s essence (*rang ngo*) is a ocean of self-arisen stainless virtue.

(This recognition) is the forever present perfection of the great accumulation and the forever present conquest of obscurations (*sgrib*) by virtue of the purification of neutral ignorance (*lung ma bstan gyi ma rig pa*).”

The term “ignorance” (*ma rig pa*) leads us to the second door of the Spontaneously Perfect Precious Mode Of Being (*lhun grub rin po che'i gnas lugs*), namely the door of the going astray of sentient beings into samsara (*sems can 'khor bar 'khrul pa'i sgo*). Actually, the Second Theme of the *Tshig don bcu gcig pa* , focuses entirely on a set of threefold ignorance as cause, and a concomitant set of fourfold conditions:

1. The ignorance of undivided identity (*bdag nyid gcig pa'i ma rig pa*),

2. the simultaneously produced ignorance (*lhan cig skyes pa'i ma rig pa*), and
3. the conceptual ignorance (*kun tu brtags pa'i ma rig pa*).

1. The first one is called “ignorance of undivided identity”, because basically, ignorance does not differ from Intelligence (*rig pa*). Thus, it simply represents the lack of such an understanding.

2. The second one points to the assumption that Intelligence and ignorance arise simultaneously (*lhan cig skyes pa*) in this first outer stirring of the ground. Another interpretation of the term “simultaneous” suggests the synchronism of the first ignorance which stands for the subject-side, i.e., consciousness, and the second one which arises in this phase of self-appearance as its object in the form of the Five lights (*'od lnga*).

3. The third one comes after the two kinds of ignorance mentioned above and represents the conceptual misapprehension of the self-appearance of the ground.

Ignorance is accompanied by four conditions (*rkyen bzhi*) which arise together with it:

1. The causal condition (*rgyu'i rkyen*), i.e., the threefold ignorance itself.
2. The object-condition (*dmigs pa'i rkyen*), i.e., the outer arising of the Five Lights (*'od lnga*).

3. The dominant condition (*bdag po'i rkyen*), i.e., the apprehension of these lights by the "Self" (*bdag*).
4. The simultaneous condition (*mtshungs pa'i rkyen*) finally, expresses the synchronism of the three conditions mentioned above.

Thus, the text of the Second Theme runs as follows:

"The essence, the Pristine Cognition (of) Intelligence initiates the cause of the ground of error (*'khrul gzhi*) and changes into the ignorance of undivided identity (*bdag nyid gcig pa'i ma rig pa*).

The nature brings forth the condition of error whereby the propelling wind (*'phen pa'i rlung*) arises.

Lighting up as colours it turns into the simultaneously produced ignorance (*lhan cig skyes pa'i ma rig pa*).

The compassion produces the result of error in that the Pristine Cognition dwelling in the ground (*gzhi gnas kyi ye shes*) comes to be the conceptual ignorance (*kun tu brtags pa'i ma rig pa*).

Now, not knowing that Intelligence and ignorance are like front and back of one hand, the ignorance dependent on Intelligence, (being) the error relying on the lack of error (*ma 'khrul pa*), (arises) .

As one is labelling (the initial appearance of the ground), it arises as (object of) names.

Thus, by designating it by various names such as "this is the Pristine Cognition of Intelligence and this is ignorance and error", it turns into the conceptual

ignorance (*kun tu brtags pa'i ma rig pa*).

Conceiving of it as object and subject - being similar to the (reflected) figure of a man (apprehended by him) - produces the cause of error, namely the three kinds of ignorance called "causal condition" (*rgyu'i rkyen*).

The so called object-condition (*dmigs pa'i rkyen*) is arising as various mental images of objects, thus, it is similar to (reflections of) a mirror, and the "I" and "Self", the variety of apprehending and apprehended (*gzung 'dzin*), (represents) the dominant condition (*bdag po'i rkyen*).

Since these three conditions (arise) at the same time, (the fourth) one is called simultaneous condition (*mtshungs pa'i rkyen*), and the turning into the impure (caused by these four conditions) can be exemplified by the nameless turning into names.

Thus, going astray by not knowing the essence, the places of sentient beings, the sense organs, and the passions manifest beyond measure."

A presentation of the formation of the life-horizons of sentient beings is out of the scope of this work. The salient feature of it, however, is, as it were, the increasing materialization of light, light understood as inherently intelligent. Remarkable in this context is the fact that the ensuing concretization of the appearance of the ground into the different life-horizons of sentient beings is viewed only as an incidental process triggered by ignorance. How this process leads to a hardening of the Five Lights into the Five Elementary Forces (*'byung ba lnga*) - the whole process being

a misapprehension of the potentiality of Pristine Cognition (*ye shes kyi rtsal*) - is explained in the following quotation⁵⁸:

“Concerning the reason of the presence of the Five Outer Elementary Forces: First, on account of the arising of the potentiality of Pristine Cognition in (its) ever non-existent emptiness, the Five Lights have arisen.

On account of unceasing Intelligence (present) in this (potentiality), a (subjective) apprehending of the Five Lights has arisen.

Holding them as real (*dngos 'dzin*) is called “wind”.

Ultimately, it is the potentiality of Intelligence.

In this (context) the red inner radiation (*mdangs*) is the Discriminating Pristine Cognition (*so sor rtog pa'i ye shes*).

Going astray on account of holding this (red light) as real, the red fire has arisen.

In this (red fire) has arisen the warmth of the wind (which is) the potentiality of Intelligence.

Moreover, the Pristine Cognition of Equality (*mnyam nyid kyi ye shes*) has lit up as yellow light.

On account of apprehending it, the earth has arisen.

On account of apprehending the arising of the white light (of) the Mirror-Like Pristine Cognition (*me long lta bu'i ye shes*), the white water has arisen.

On account of apprehending the arising of the green light of the Accomplishing Pristine Cognition (*bya grub kyi ye shes*), the air has arisen.

Concerning the Elementary Force space: It abides

since the primordial beginning together with Pristine
Cognition, and even in the end, it is free of shifting
and changing (*'pho 'gyur med*).”

The Third Theme

**The presence of the core or seed of perfect Buddhahood
in sentient beings despite of the already arisen delusion**

The mode of abiding of the Buddha-Essence (*snying po*) in sentient beings is frequently treated in *Rdzogs chen* texts by means of general and specific explanations. As there is only a specific explanation to be found in our text, we have to take recourse to the *TDZ*⁵⁹ in order to make available a general explanation of the third theme. There one finds quotations from tantric as well as from *sūtric* sources. According to the *Rdzogs chen Tantra Rdo rje sems dpa' snying gi me long* , the Buddha-Essence exists in sentient beings of the Three Realms (*'jig rten gyi khams gsum*) in the same way as oil is present in a sesame seed. Similar descriptions can also be found in *Rdzogs chen* Tantras like *Nor bu 'phra bkod* and *Sgra thal 'gyur*. Quotations from other Tantras such as the famous *Kye rdo rje* (*Hevajratantra*) are brought up in order to prove the correctness of the assumption of a Buddha-Essence:

“In the body (of all sentient beings) the great Pristine
Cognition is present.

(It is) the perfect abandonment of all discursive
thoughts.

It pervades all things.

It is present in the body, but has not taken birth from it.”

As a *sūtric* source, the text '*Mya ngan las 'das pa chen po'i mdo* (*Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*) is quoted. Here, the Buddha-Essence is compared with a golden treasure hidden in a poor house whereof the owner is ignorant. The usual doubts concerning the ultimately valid (*nges don*) presence of the Buddha-Essence are based on the supposition that the nature of mind (*sems nyid*), that is to say emptiness itself (*stong pa nyid*), does not exhibit Buddha-Qualities (*yon tan*) such as the Major and Minor Marks (*mtshan dpe*) or the Ten Powers of a Buddha (*stobs bcu*). In this context, the opponents of an ultimately valid Buddha-Essence argue that all texts of the *Shes rab pha rol tu phyin pa* (*Prajñāpāramitā*) liken the selfless nature of phenomena (*gnas lugs bdag med*) to the empty sky. Accordingly, the Buddha-Essence conceived of as possessing manifold positive qualities is merely accepted as a provisionally valid (*drang don*) concept. Without defining it as such, it would be identical with the self of the Non-Buddhists (*mu stegs pa*). However, *Klong chen rab 'byams* insists on the ultimate validity of the Buddha-Essence. In his view, the fact that Buddha Śakyamunī has finally turned a third wheel (*'khor lo gsum pa*)⁶⁰ focusing on the Buddha-Essence, is in evidence of the correctness of not classifying the second one with its emphasis on exclusive emptiness (*stong nyid rkyang pa*) as ultimately valid. Exclusive emptiness is viewed upon as intended for beginners not yet being able to free themselves from an attachment to a self (*bdag tu 'dzin pa*). *Klong chen rab 'byams* does not admit the objection that the Buddha-Essence exhibiting Buddha-Qualities is identical with the self of the heretics, because he does not deny its emptiness, that is to say, in his line of thought it does not represent a

specifically characterised thing (*dnegos po rang mtshan*).

Moreover, as the Buddha-Essence can neither be defined as eternal nor as non-eternal, he thinks that it would be incorrect to conceive of it as something exclusively eternal. Last but not least, it can be revealed by means of quintessential instructions of a teacher, hence, it is freely accessible.

According to the specific explanation to be found in the Third Theme of the text, the core or seed of perfect Buddhahood presents itself in the body of sentient beings in the form of six different sets, each exhibiting five aspects:

“It is said that the core of perfect Buddhahood pervades all sentient beings, because the Pristine Cognition of Intelligence resides in the body of a sentient being in fivefold form, namely as Five Buddha-Bodies (*sku Inga*), Five Buddha-Families (*rigs Inga*), Five Aspects of Pristine Cognition (*ye shes Inga*), Five Winds (*rlung Inga*), Five Aspects of Discriminative Awareness (*shes rab Inga*), and as Five Lights (*‘od Inga*).

It is also said that one’s own body is *Vajra*-Buddha(hood), that Buddhahood resides in one’s own body and that it cannot be revealed somewhere else.

Therefore, concerning the Pristine Cognition of Intelligence itself, as it appears (in and as cognition of) forms of objects (*rnam pa’i yul*), it is the Self-Arisen Body of Making Appear Objects in Their Distinctiveness (*rnam par snang mdzad sku / Vairocana*), not to be searched for elsewhere.

“*Vajra*” means that insofar as the unchanging essence

of Intelligence is not shaken by conceptual thoughts,
Intelligence itself has arisen as the Unchanging
Vajra-Body (Rdo rje mi 'gyur ba'i sku / Akṣobhya).
Furthermore, since unfathomable doors of expanding
qualities such as the the Vision of Increasing
Experiences (*nyams snang gong 'phel*) have arisen
from Pristine Cognition of Intelligence, it has arisen
itself as (the Buddha) Source of Preciousness
(*Rin chen'byung ldan / Ratnasambhāva*).
Since the aspect of clarity (*gsal cha*) of Intelligence
has appeared as limitless light-rays, it has arisen itself
as (the Buddha) Limitless Illumination (*Snang ba
mtha' yas / Amitābha*) (and) Unfathomable Light
(*'Od dpag med*).
Furthermore, since the Pristine Cognition of Intelligence
itself is present in the essence of Pristine Cognition,
and since accomplishment is certain by having made
an experience of it, it has arisen itself as (the Buddha)
Accomplishment of Meaning (*Don yod grub pa /
Amoghasiddhi*).
Thus, the *Rdzogs chen* adept does not have to search
for the tutelary deity (*yi dam gyi lha*) elsewhere and
he does not have to contemplate it.
Therefore, he is free from debilitating disease.
Furthermore, one's own nature of mind has arisen as
Five Buddha-Families (*rigs lnga*): Since the
Intelligence has gone into the unborn Space
(*skye med kyi dbyings*) and has been absorbed
there without its potential being obstructed (*rtsal 'gag
med*) thereby , it is the Buddha-Family of the One

Who has Gone to Suchness (*de bzhin gshegs pa'i rigs*).

Since its essence (can) not be changed by conditions, it is the *Vajra-Buddha-Family* (*rdo rje rigs*).

Since all Buddha-Qualities are present in it in self-perfection, it is the Buddha-Family of Preciousness (*rin po che'i rigs*) and since its essence (can)not be defiled by faults, it is the Buddha-Family of Lotus (*padma'i rigs*).

Since everything is present as action of miraculous display (*cho 'phrul*) of Intelligence, it is the Buddha-Family of Accomplished Action (*las kyi rigs*).

Furthermore, Intelligence itself is also present as Five Aspects of Pristine Cognition: Since everything, religious activities (*chos spyod*) and (objects) being existent by way of their own characteristics (*rang gi mtshan nyid*) or being qualified by form (*gzugs can*), manifest clearly (*gsal ba*) out of the range of Intelligence, it is the mirror-like Pristine Cognition.

Since the variety of things (*chos can*) are equal in the expanse of the unborn nature of appearances, it is the Pristine Cognition of equality.

Since out of its range all Buddha-Qualities manifest clearly without their aspects becoming mixed up, it is the fully discriminating Pristine Cognition.

Furthermore, it is not necessary to realize it by means of exertion.

Since it is present forever (*ye nas*) in spontaneously accomplished self-clarity, it is the accomplishing Pristine Cognition.

However, all these (aspects of Pristine Cognition)

(can)not be separated.

Since they (exhibit) One Taste (*ro gcig*) in the reality of appearances (which is) emptiness itself, (Intelligence) is the Pristine Cognition of reality.

One's own Intelligence itself has also arisen as Five

Lights: Since Intelligence itself is not defiled by karma (*las*) and afflictions (*nyon mongs*), it also appears as white (light).

Because (its) Buddha-Qualities are perfect, it also appears as yellow (light).

Since everything is under control of Intelligence, it appears as red (light).

Since it is beyond exertion, it is green (light).

Since its essence is not changing despite its arising in diversity, it appears as blue (light).

Intelligence itself has also arisen as Five Winds:

Because it brings down the warmth of the Pristine Cognition of Intelligence, it is called "the wind that is accompanied by fire" (*me dang mnyam pa'i rlung*).

Because it upholds the life-force of the whole of samsara and nirvana, it is the wind that upholds the life-force (*srog 'dzin gyi rlung*).

Since it distinguishes (things) such as sense-organs, objects and colours it is the wind that separates the pure from the refuse (*dwangs snyigs 'byed pa'i rlung*).

Since it pervades the whole of samsara and nirvana, it is the pervading wind (*khyab byed kyī rlung*).

Since it drives one to the level of nirvana (*mya ngang*

las 'das pa), it is called “the wind of action that has no compassion” (*snying rje med pa las kyi rlung*).

Intelligence itself is also present as Five Aspects of

Discriminative Awareness: Since it has become the ground of arising of the whole of samsara and nirvana, it is the discriminative awareness that does not distinguish (*'phyad pa med pa'i shes rab*).

Since it is not beyond the range of one's own

Intelligence, it is the discriminative awareness that holds together (*sdud par byed pa'i shes rab*).

Since it has arisen as the essence of everything, it is the discriminative awareness that pervades (*khyab par byed pa'i shes rab*).

Since it acts in (its own) Space through recourse to the wind of Pristine Cognition (*ye shes kyi rlung*), it is the discriminative awareness that moves (*skyod pa'i shes rab*).

Since it clears misconceptions concerning both, samsara and nirvana, it is present as the discriminative awareness that clears misconceptions (*sgro 'dogs gcod pa'i shes rab*).

Thus, since there is nothing else than Intelligence itself, it is called “self-arisen Pristine Cognition” (*rang byung gi ye shes*).

Furthermore, since it is present (*gnas pa*) in its essence as Buddha-Body, it is the *dharmakāya* itself during the time of meditation (*mnyam gzhaq*).

During the time of the non-duality of meditation and post-meditation it is the *sambhogakāya*, and during

the time of post-meditation (*rjes thob*) it is the *nirmaṇakāya* .

Since its nature is clearly manifest as light, it abides in the ground as self-clarity and its sign clearly manifests as lamps.

The aspect of its compassion is present as Pristine Cognition.

Thus, since it is present as ground of everything, it is not necessary to search for Buddha (elsewhere), being the proof that one's own mind is Buddha forever.”

In what way the five aspects of essence, nature, and compassion are present in sentient beings is elucidated in the following quotation⁶¹:

“Sixth, as to the five aspects of essence, nature, and compassion: The meaning of these (five aspects) (can) be subsumed under the Three Buddha-Bodies of the Pristine Cognition which is present in the ground (*gzhi gnas kyi ye shes*).

The five (aspects of) the essence are correlated to the Five Buddha-Bodies of the ground of arising, and the five (aspects of) the nature are correlated to the appearance of Five Lights.

The five (aspects of) compassion are correlated to the Five Aspects of Pristine Cognition.

They are the compassion of the natural force at the level of Buddhahood (*sangs rgyas kyi sar rang bzhin shugs kyi thugs rje*), the compassion that contacts

conditions and objects (*rkyen yul dang 'phrad pa'i thugs rje*), the compassion (caused by) exhortation and supplication (*bskul zhing gsol ba btab pa'i thugs rje*), the compassion of various activities (*mdzad pa sna tshogs kyi thugs rje*), and the compassion that does not change (its attitude concerning) those to be tamed (*gdul bya mi 'gyur ba'i thugs rje*).

These five (aspects of compassion) have arisen out of the spontaneously accomplished aspect, being the aspect of the ground of arising (of everything) present now in the Pristine Cognition of Intelligence.“

It has to be noted that all these sets exhibiting five aspects are merely potentially at disposal in the ground. As mentioned above, butter potentially present in milk serves as an example for their mode of being during the time before the arising of the ground as anything. Thus, according to *Klong chen rab 'byams* one has to distinguish clearly between the mode of being of the core or seed of perfect Buddhahood during the time of the ground and the time of the result.

The Fourth Theme

The precise location of the seed or essence of perfect Buddhahood

“Moreover, the Pristine Cognition of Intelligence abides in The Precious Palace of the Heart (*tsitta rin po che'i gzhal yas khang*) being situated in the middle of the body.

It abides there as the Peaceful Buddha-Body (*zhi ba'i sku*) which has approximately the size of a mustard-seed with eyes in proportion to it.

It is described as “mustard-seed” on account of being subtle and difficult to realize.

“Eyes in proportion to it” means that vast visions of Pristine Cognition (arise) in dependence upon a subtle practice (*nyams len*).

Furthermore, the abiding of the essence (of Pristine Cognition of Intelligence) as Buddha-Body is similar to a Vase-Body (*bum sku*).

The abiding of its nature as light resembles a butterlamp inside a vase (*bum nang gi mar me*), and the door of the lamps lights up unceasingly on account of the abiding of (its) compassion as light-rays (*'od zer*).

Incidentally, ignorance, passion, karma, karmic propensities (*bag chags*), discursive thought (*rnam par rtog pa*), etc., abide in the lungs by virtue of the power of karmic wind (*las rlung*).”

According to *Rdzogs chen* thought, the Pristine Cognition of Intelligence, defined here as seed or essence of perfect Buddhahood, pervades the whole body of sentient beings, but its focal point, being localized in the heart, is called “the Precious Palace of the Heart”. Even though only the heart is mentioned in our text, in general, one can distinguish four such focal points:

1. The Precious Palace of the Heart, (*tsitta rin po che'i gzhal yas khang*),
2. the Palace of the Channels Initiating Movement (*'gyu byed rtsa yi gzhal yas*),
3. the Palace of the Skull Mansion (*dung khang bhandha'i gzhal yas*), and
4. the Palace of the Eyes Initiating Seeing (*lta byed mig gi gzhal yas*)⁶².

The Palace of the Channels Initiating Movement and the Palace of the Eyes Initiating Seeing will be discussed in the context of the Sixth Theme dealing with the Four Great Channels (*rtsa chen bzhi*) and the Four Lamps (*sgron ma bzhi*).

As far as the focal points of the heart and the skull are concerned, one can find numerous descriptions of them. For instance, the Precious Palace of the Heart is circumscribed as the Intention of the Closed Sphere of Samantabhadra (*kun tu bzang po ga'u kha sbyor gyi dgongs pa*)⁶³. In the middle of this sphere, the Forty-Two Peaceful Buddha-Bodies (*zhi ba'i sku*), headed by the Five Buddha-Families, are present in the

size of a mustard-seed, covered by five-coloured light.

In the skull reside the Fifty-Eight Wrathful Buddha-Bodies (*khro bo'i sku*) as radiation of the Pristine Cognition (*ye shes kyi gdangs*) of the focal point of the heart. Here, the Five Buddha-Families manifest themselves as the Five *Herukas*, namely as *Vajra Heruka* (*Badzra he ru ka*), *Buddha Heruka* (*Buddha he ru ka*), *Ratna Heruka* (*Ratna he ru ka*), *Padma Heruka* (*Padma he ru ka*) and *Karma Heruka* (*Karma he ru ka*)⁶⁴. In other *Rdzogs chen* texts⁶⁵, the *dharmakāya* is associated with the clarity of unimpeded Intelligence (*rig pa ma 'gags par gsal ba*), the *sambhogakāya* with the Palace of the Skull Mansion and the *nirmanakāya* with the Palace of the Channels Initiating Movement.

In the text all these Buddha-Bodies represent aspects of the essence of the Pristine Cognition of Intelligence. Its nature, the five-coloured light and five-coloured seeds of light, pervades all channels, but resides mainly in five energy-centres (*'khor lo lnga*)⁶⁶. These bright appearances of its nature are considered to be the self-radiation of the Peaceful and Wrathful Buddha-Bodies (*zhi khro'i rang mdangs*), and they are said to vary in their size from the limitless sky down to a tenth part of a single hair of a horse's tail. During life they remain in latency, but after death, during the visions of the Intermediate State of Reality Itself (*chos nyid kyi bar do*), there is the possibility of becoming aware of them.

According to the point of view of *Rdzogs chen*, an adept of the Leaping Over (*thod rgal*) is capable of letting them manifest even during life in the form of visions projected in the clear and empty sky. The actual manifestation of these visions in the sky, called "rays of light" (*zer*), is effected by the third

aspect of Pristine Cognition of Intelligence, namely compassion, by means of the Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything at a Distance. Since one is dealing here in the Fourth Theme with the *corporeal* presence of the Pristine Cognition of Intelligence, its essence is likened to a Vase-Body, its nature to a butterlamp inside such a vase, and its compassion to rays of light illuminating the outer rim of the vase. But how is to be understood the statement that karma, karmic propensities, and discursive thought abide in the lungs by virtue of the power of karmic wind?

To begin with, from the point of view of certain *Rdzogs chen* Tantras such as the *Rdo rje sems dpa' snying gi me long*⁶⁷, treasure texts like the *ZMY*⁶⁸, and commentaries to be found in the *TCZ*, mind (*sems*) and its discursive thought does not abide in the lungs, but in a channel between heart and lungs. In the following lengthy quotation one finds a description of eight aspects relating to mind⁶⁹:

“Fourth, there are eight specific topics of the mind, namely its base, its place, its way, its door, its essence, its potential, its activity, and its result.

From among them, its base is the chest of the aggregate of form (*gzugs kyi phung po*).

Its place is a channel (that has the size) of about a straw (*sog ma*) which connects the heart and the lungs and (in which) the radiation of Intelligence (*rig pa'i gdangs*) rides on the horse of the wind (*rlung gi rta*).

The wind is like a blind horse with legs and the radiation of Intelligence resembles a cripple with eyes.

Movements of conceptual thoughts will not arise,
provided that these two do not mingle together.

Consequently, the radiation will abide as a natural
attribute (*rang chas su*) of Intelligence itself.

Without conceptual thought about appearing objects,
a distinctively clear (*dangs sangs phyed pa*)
consciousness arises.

This is the reason why one has to separate wind and
Intelligence by means of the pith of wind.

The moving part in the arising of any conceptual
thoughts on account of the mingling of these two is
the wind and its knowing part is the radiation of
Intelligence.

Moreover, the Intelligence inside the heart is like water
itself, and its radiating potential (*rtsal gdangs*) having
gone into the cavity of the channel (between heart and
lungs) and being the mind mingled together with the
wind, is like a bubble.

Furthermore, mind relies on the previous presence of
Intelligence.

On the previous presence of mind, however,
Intelligence is not dependent.

In its essence, Intelligence cannot be controlled
by mind.

But since (mind) is its potential, it is controlled
by Intelligence.

When the water is not moving, there are no waves.

Likewise, when Intelligence is not moving, no
conceptual thought of mind occurs.

The (*Rdzogs chen* Tantra) *Rang shar* says:

Mind and Intelligence are exemplified by water
and its bubbles.

(Intelligence) cannot be controlled by mind.

As for its way, it moves along the life-channel

(*srog rtsa*), because there moves the horse of
mind, the life-wind (*srog rlung*).

Its door is the mouth and the nose, because the wind is
coming out there.

Its essence is the subject-object structure (*gzung*
'dzin), being samsara itself.

Its potential is the grasping of objects and the
attachment to the self.

Its action is bringing forth the variety of samsaric
pleasure and pain.

Its result is samsara and its bad migrations (*ngan*
song) without limit.”

Examples of texts localizing the mind in the lungs are the
*KDNYT*⁷⁰, but also the *ZMYT*⁷¹. However, in consideration of
what has been said, it should be clear that it is not the
definition of a precise site of mind that is of major importance
here, but the assumption that mind is evolving on account of
the mingling of the radiation of Intelligence with wind, called in
this context “karmic wind” (*las rlung*). It has to be noted that in
Rdzogs chen one distinguishes between the karmic wind and
its counterpart, the wind of Pristine Cognition (*ye shes kyi*
rlung). The following quotation sheds some light on what is
meant by “karmic wind”⁷²:

“But afterwards the karmic wind has arisen (which is) the grasping as real (*dnegos ‘dzin*) of the appearance of the Five Lights being the inherent potentiality (*rang rtsal*) of emptiness, and on account of the power of entering into grasping the inherent light of the Five Aspects of Pristine Cognitions, the Five Elementary Forces have appeared concretely: From the distillate (*dangs ma*) of the Five Outer Elementary Forces, the Five Inner Properties (*nang gi khams lnga*) (of the body)⁷³, the Six Sources of Sense Perception (*skyed mched drug*)⁷⁴, etc., have arisen whereby the whole of worlds and their inhabitants (*snod bcud*) is gradually established.”

The main characteristics of the wind of Pristine Cognition, as well as its relationship to the karmic wind are elucidated in the following quotation⁷⁵:

“In short, “wind of Pristine Cognition” is a name given to compassion (which is) the essence of Intelligence. Furthermore, on account of existing as inseparable identity of essence, nature, and compassion it is called “Pristine Cognition”.

Resembling in its rudimentary movement and its rudimentary knowing (*rig tsam*) to the wind, it is called “wind”.

Ultimately, wind is (nothing else than) mind, the root of (the wind).

After having burdened the horse of wind with rudimentary knowing which is the radiation of the Pristine Cognition, the manifold collection of

consciousness (*rnam shes kyi tshogs*) has arisen.

The essence of the wind of Pristine Cognition is freedom from all extremes of conceptuality (*sprobsbral*) on account of its being empty.

Its nature is its appearance as Buddha-Bodies and (aspects of) Pristine Cognition on account of its being clear.

Its compassion is the arising of the Pristine Cognition of omniscience (*thams cad mkhyen pa'i ye shes*) and of the Pristine Cognition of knowing all aspects (*rnam pa thams cad mkhyen pa'i ye shes*).

Even though this (wind of Pristine Cognition) is named “wind”, it is but the inner clarity of Pristine Cognition and its outer arising as completely pure radiation which appears on the way of a yogin.”

The two aspects of wind open up two different worlds of experience: The karmic wind initiates the appearances or visions of karmic propensities (*bag chags kyi snang ba*) as illustrated by the worlds of the Six Sentient Beings (*rigs drug*), and the wind of Pristine Cognition elicits the visions of Pristine Cognition, usually subsumed under the term “Three Buddha-Bodies”. They are dealt with extensively in the Eighth Theme of the text.

The Fifth Theme

The way taken by Pristine Cognition

“(The body) has arisen out of the channels.

In order to know the definite characteristics of the channels, one has to know the definite characteristics of the body.

Moreover, if one does not know the definite characteristics of the formation of the body, one also does not know the definite characteristics of its (temporal) presence.

If one does not know that, one also does not know the definite characteristics of its final destruction.

Thus, if one does not know this, one will not know the mode of being of the channels.

Moreover, concerning the definite characteristics of the formation of the body (it has to be said) that the consciousness of those having a mental body (*yid kyi lus*) of the intermediate state - having left behind their former life - is floating and flickering.

Presenting themselves like that, they assemble on account of being pushed by their former karma in front of males and females having intercourse like flies gathering around fresh meat.

Even the life (of an intermediate state) of some of them is cut off (on account of not having a karmic

connection with the males and females being present).

Finally, in accordance with their good and bad karma they see (a specific womb) as place of refuge and enter it through the anus.

Wrapped up in the net of the womb, mind and wind (*rlung sems*), and semen and menstrual blood (*khu khrag*) blend together.

Thus, from among cause and condition, semen and blood are the condition, (initializing) the action of the Four Relative Elementary Forces (*kun rdzob kyi 'byung ba bzhi*), and mind and wind are the cause, (initializing) the action of the Four Ultimate Elementary Forces (*don dam gyi 'byung ba bzhi*).

In the first day, on account of the action of the water condensing (the small seeds or drops of) the Four (Relative Elementary Forces) into one, the base (of the body) (having) an oval shape (*mer mer po*) and (measuring) about the hundredth part of a mustard seed, is constituted.

In the second day, on account of the action of the earth, those (small drops), having (now) the size of about the tenth part of a mustard seed, stay together and rest stable.

In the third day, on account of the action of the fire, the quickly moving oval shape (of the body) which resembles mercury, splashes up, and being not mixed up with something else than (the drops of the Four Relative Elementary Forces) it measures about the third part of a mustard seed.

In the fourth day, on account of the wind, those subtle drops (forming the oval shape) are scattered into hundred thousand (drops).

Afterwards they are again condensed and constituted (as the oval shape of the body) which resembles mercury and which (has now) the size of about half a mustard seed.

In the fifth day, on account of the water, (what is) pure and waste (*dwangs snyigs*) (of them) is condensed, and afterwards (those drops forming the oval shape of the body) rest stable on account of the earth and ripen to the size of about one mustard seed.

In the sixth day, fire and wind make (the oval shape of the body) appear distinct and clear by ripening it, whereby it assumes the size of two mustard seeds.

In the seventh day, two small and very subtle eyes are produced inside the drops (forming) the oval shape (of the body) having (now) the size of two mustard seeds.

At this time, the action of the Four (Relative)

Elementary Forces is in a state of agitation: The moisture of water disperses (the drops forming the oval shape (of the body), the weight of earth pushes (them) down, and the wind produces (out of them) the lamps.

Thus, (the wind) also ripens (them) into the Buddha-Body in the heart and into the drops (*thig le*) in the channels.

It ripens (them) into the Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a Distance (which is) in the eyes, into the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space, into the Lamp of

Empty Drops of Light, and into the Lamp of Self
Arisen Discriminative Awareness.

The result is the inseparable union of Space and
Pristine Cognition (*dbyings ye shes su 'du bral med*).
The Drop of Nature (*rang bzhin gyi thig le*) is present
at the time of meditation.

The Drop of Reality Itself (*chos nyid kyi thig le*) is
present at the time of giving rise to experiences
out of (the Drop of Nature).

At the time of its stabilization (it is present as) the Drop
of Utterly Pure Reality (*chos nyid rnam par dag pa'i
thig le*), and at the time of its appearance (as) the
Drop of Space (*dbyings kyi thig le*).

At the time of expansion (of visions coming) out of it,
(it is present as) the Drop of Utterly Pure Space
(*dbyings rnam par dag pa'i thig le*), and at the time of
its perfection as the Drop of Samantabhadra (*kun tu
bzang po'i thig le*).

At the time of its arising outwardly, (it is present as) the
Drop of Great Pristine Cognition (*ye shes chen po'i
thig le*).

Thus, the explanation of the way taken (by Pristine
Cognition) is concluded.”

According to the text, the lamps (*sgron ma*) are set up in the
seventh day of the formation of the body by means of the wind.
However, it has to be noted that the wind does not actually
create the four lamps mentioned here, except for the physical
organ of the eyes which is correlated to the Lamp of Water that

Lassos Everything At a Distance (*rgyang zhags cu'i sgron ma*). Rather, the movement of the wind, controlled by a *Rdzogs chen* adept opens up the way to perceive the visions or appearances (*snang ba*) associated with the lamps which are said to be unproduced by any causes or conditions. In the seventh day, two eyes are produced in the navel-centre (*lte ba'i rtsa mdud*), namely the Eye of the Elementary Forces (*'byung ba'i spyang*) and the Eye of the Lamps (*sgron ma'i spyang*). The former one controls the formation of the body by means of the Relative Elementary Forces (*kun rdzobs rgyu'i 'byung bzhi*), whereas the latter is conducive to the arising of aspects of Pristine Cognition (*ye shes kyi snang ba*) such as lamps (*sgron ma*), light-rays (*'od zer*), light-drops (*thig le*) and Buddha-Bodies (*sku*).

According to *TDZ* however, the two eyes arise in the navel-centre during the fourteenth day of the embryonic development, effected by the Elementary Force Space⁷⁶. Moreover, there⁷⁷ it is elucidated how the Ultimate Four Elementary Forces (*don dam gyi 'byung bzhi*) directed by the Eye of the Lamps spread out of four channels, laying the foundation of the Four Lamps. In the first four days of the formation of the body these four channels are formed one after the other in the left, in the right, in the back and in the front of the womb. Thus:

1. Out of the channel of the wind of the water (*chu'i rlung gi rtsa*) spreads the non-substantial white colour which lays the foundation of the Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a Distance (*rgyang zhag chu'i sgron ma*). This lamp is said to be responsible for the arising of light and of

the Vision of the Immediate Perception of Reality Itself
(*chos nyid mngon sum gyi snang ba*).

2. The colour red is emerging from the channel of the fire
(*me'i rtsa*) and brings forth the Lamp of Empty Drops of Light
(*thig le stong pa'i sgron ma*) which again initiates the
constitution of Buddha-Bodies and the Vision of Increasing
Experiences (*nyams gong 'phel gyi snang ba*).

3. The colour yellow, having its source in the channel of
the earth (*sa'i rtsa*), produces the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space
(*dbyings rnam par dag pa'i sgron ma*) out of which Pristine
Cognition associated here with the Vision of the Intelligence
Reaching Its Peak (*rig pa tshad phebs kyi snang ba*), makes
itself felt.

4. Coming out of the channel of the wind (*rlung gi rtsa*),
the colour green initiates the Lamp of Self-Arisen
Discriminative Awareness (*shes rab rang byung gi sgron ma*).
This lamp again makes possible the arising of Intelligence (*rig
pa*) and of the Vision of Exhaustion of Reality Itself (*chos nyid
zad pa'i snang ba*).

The result of the interplay of the Four Lamps, the
inseparable union of Space and Pristine Cognition (*dbyings ye
shes su 'du bral med*), will be treated in the context of the
elucidation of the Inner and Outer Space as witnessed in the
Sixth Theme. Briefly, Space represents the nature of the mind,
and Pristine Cognition is its perception. In a slightly different

definition, Space is the cause of Pristine Cognition, considered as its result.

As mentioned above, the Eye of the Lamps (*sgron ma'i spyan*) is also responsible for the formation of drops (*thig le*). Seven kinds or phases of drops are distinguished in the last part of the Fifth Theme:

1. The Drop of Nature (*rang bzhin gyi thig le*),
2. the Drop of Reality Itself (*chos nyid kyi thig le*),
3. the Drop of Utterly Pure Reality (*chos nyid rnam par dag pa'i thig le*),
4. the Drop of Space (*dbyings kyi thig le*),
5. the Drop of Utterly Pure Space (*dbyings rnam par dag pa'i thig le*),
6. the Drop of Samantabhadra (*kun tu bzang po'i thig le*),
and
7. the Drop of Great Pristine Cognition (*ye shes chen po'i thig le*).

In the *BMNYT*⁷⁸ a description of the size of these drops and of the light-channels accomodating them is given. Except for the *chos nyid rnam par dag pa'i thig le* which is replaced here by the *ye shes kyi thig le*, all other drops are identical with the ones listed above. Noteworthy is the fact that the Drop of Nature (*rang bzhin gyi thig le*) is not localized. According to *TDZ*⁷⁹ however, this drop moves in the central channel (*dbu ma*) and develops itself during six kinds or phases of drops. Even though some of these seven drops are mentioned in several principal Tantras of the Instruction-Class (*man ngag sde*), the arrangement as given in the Fifth Theme of the text

cannot be found there. Thus, according to the *BMNYT*⁸⁰, the relationship between drops and light-channels - all of them are located in the heart (*tistta*) - is as follows:

1. In the Channel of the Precious Threaded White Crystal (*rin po che shel dkar rgyus pa'i rtsa*) which is located in the uppermost part of the heart, the Drop of Utterly Pure Space (*dbyings rnam par dag pa'i thig le*) moves. Being as big as a bean it is five-coloured, emanates light and accomodates Buddha-Bodies.
2. The Channel of the Precious Crystal Tube (*rin po che shel gyi sbu gu can*) is situated in the right part of the heart and contains the Drop of Space (*dbyings kyi thig le*). Again, this drop has the size of a small bean, but it is exclusively white and lacks Buddha-Bodies.
3. The Channel of the Precious Gathered Web (*rin po che dra ba 'dus pa*) has its position in the middle of the heart, and there, the Drop of Samantabhadra (*kun tu bzang po'i thig le*) flows. This drop is not bigger than a mustard-seed and of red colour. Enclosing heaps of five-coloured light, it expands and contracts light.
4. In the Channel of the Precious Inherently Pure Emptiness (*rin po che stong pa rang sang*) which is also to be found in the middle of the heart, the Drop of Reality Itself (*chos nyid kyi thig le*) is contained. Being yellow and having the size of a tip of a hair, it neither expands nor contracts (light).

5. In the Channel of the Precious Perfection of Highest Action (*rin po che las rab rdzogs pa'i rtsa*), in the lower part of the heart, the reddish-yellow Drop of Pristine Cognition (*ye shes kyi thig le*) stays in the form of a sesame-seed without moving.
6. The Channel of the Precious White Silk Thread (*rin po che dar dkar snal ma lta bu'i rtsa*) is located in the lateral part of the heart and accomodates the Drop of Great Pristine Cognition. This drop is blue, it moves (inside this channel) and has the size of the tenth part of a hair of a horse's tail.

According to the text, the way taken by Pristine Cognition is closely related to the drops contained in the channels. Thus, at the time of well focused concentration, The Drop of Nature manifests itself as the Drop of Reality Itself, giving rise to first meditational experiences (*nyams*) such as physical and mental well-being or heightened intuition. These experiences are then fairly stabilized during the phase of the Drop of Utterly Pure Reality, but it is not until reaching the level of the Drop of Space that visions in the Outer Space are initiated. The Drop of Utterly Pure Space marks the ever increasing intensity of external visions which finally perfect themselves as the Drop of Samantabhadra whereby they dissolve. Their renewed appearance coincide with the realization of the body of light (*'od lus*)⁸¹ and is identical with the Drop of Great Pristine Cognition. Associated with primordial purity (*ka dag*) are the first three drops, the last four ones representing spontaneous perfection (*lhun grub*).

A slightly different arrangement of drops is given in *TCZ*⁸². Its exposition of the channels, winds and drops relies on the Tantras *Sgra thal 'gyur* and *Nyi zla kha sbyor*. The latter one presents three main aspects of drops:

1. The Drop Holding Onto the Ground (*gzhi 'dzin pa'i thig le*),
2. the Drop of the Way With Its Visions (*snang ba lam gyi thig le*), and
3. the Drop Ripening Itself to the Result (*'bras bu rang smin pa'i thig le*).

1. The Drop Holding Onto the Ground which stays in the light-channel located in the middle of the heart is called “Drop of Spontaneous Perfection” (*lhun grub kyi thig le*), because the Five Lights (*'od lnga*) are there naturally present. Moreover, since it appears with a bright circumference of the Five Lights it is termed “Drop of Natural Light (*rang bzhin 'od kyi thig le*), and in view of being endowed with the Intelligence of primordial purity it is given the name “Drop of Samantabhadra” (*kun tu bzang po'i thig le*).

In the *TCZ* it is mentioned that the Drop Holding Onto the Ground is identical with the Indestructible Drop (*mi shigs thig le*) of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* (*Gsang 'dus*) and with the Unchanging Drop (*mi 'gyur thig le*) of the *Cakrasamvara Tantra* (*Bde mchog*).

2. The two aspects of the Drop of the Way With Its Visions are named “Relative Causal Drop” (*kun rdzobs rgyu'i thig le*) and “Abiding Ultimate Drop” (*gnas pa don dam gyi thig le*).

As elucidated in *TCZ*, the former one moves in the channels of all sentient beings as sperm, i.e., as white drop and as menstrual blood, i.e., as red drop. The latter one is related to the formation of the physical body and the former one to the formation of mental aspects of this body. The Abiding Ultimate Drop represents the five-coloured light in the heart and its outwardly directed radiation (*gdangs*). According to the Tantra *Nyi zla kha sbyor*, the former one is termed “Naturally Abiding Causal Drop” (*rang gnas rgyu'i thig le*) and the latter one “Drop Arisen From the Meditative Familiarity of an Individual” (*skyes bus goms pa las byung ba'i thig le*).

The former one is likened to a five-coloured woollen ball, because it shines as five-coloured light in the heart. At the time of having a body, this drop is moved along the channels *ro ma*, *rkyang ma*, *dbu ma*, and *shel sbug can* by the wind of Pristine Cognition (*ye shes kyi rlung*). The Drop Arisen From the Meditative Familiarity of an Individual comes up outwardly in three phases. First as banners (*snam bu*), then as light-rays and finally as drops with five-coloured circumferences.

3. The Drop Ripening Itself to the Result consists of three aspects, named “Drop of Completely Ripened Light” (*'od rnam smin pa'i thig le*), “Drop of Ripened Pristine Cognition” (*ye shes smin pa'i thig le*), and “Drop of Ripened Intelligence” (*rig pa smin pa'i thig le*). The first one manifests as vertically standing (*gyen 'greng*) light-rays, as brocade tents (*za 'og gur khyim*) and as mansions of Pristine Cognition (*ye shes kyi mkhar thabs*). Due to further intensification of meditative practice, it assumes the shape of things such as different kinds of lattice-work (*drwa ba dang drwa phyed*). The second one

comes up as five-coloured horizontally stacked layers or as five-coloured spokes (*rtsibs*). Later on, it is envisaged as points of spears (*mdung rtse*), as different kinds of weapons, as *stūpa* (*mchod rten*), as lotus flowers, etc. Finally, in the middle of the third drop dwell half and completely apparent Buddha-Bodies in *yab-yum* form. At this time, the final exhaustion of appearances is approaching.

After this discussion of the three main aspects of drops as presented in the *Nyi zla kha sbyor*, the *TCZ* quotes the Tantra *Thal 'gyur* where one is supposed to find the following drops:

1. The Three Engaging Drops (*'jug pa'i thig le gsum*), and
2. The Drops Projected Into Outer Space (*dbyings snang gi thig le'i cha*) .

1. According to a quotation from the Tantra *Nyi zla kha sbyor*⁸³, the Three Engaging Drops, i.e., the Drop of the Body of the Essence (*ngo bo sku'i thig le*), the Drop of the Light of the Nature (*rang bzhin 'od kyi thig le*), and the Drop of the Rays of the Compassion (*thugs rje zer gyi thig le*), are not outwardly visible, but are only present in the Inner Space (*nang dbyings*).

2. The Drops Projected Into Outer Space (*dbyings snang gi thig le'i cha*) are said to consist of the Five Originating Drops (*skye ba'i thig le lnga*) and the Six Arrayed Drops (*bkod pa'i thig le drug*). The Five Originating Drops appear in five different forms: As weapons and lotus flowers, as *stūpa*, as lattice-work, and as mansions of Pristine Cognition. The Six

Arrayed Drop arises as half apparent (*phyed sku*), as solitary and as *yab-yum* Buddha-Bodies, as entourage of the Five Buddha-Families, as fivefold heap of each of them and as great heap which is the appearance of the complete *mandala*. Even though the mode of appearance of the Five Originating Drops and of the Six Arrayed Drops is described in *TCZ*, their names, however, could neither be found there nor in the Tantra *Sgra thal 'gyur*.

Then, quoting from the Tantra *Rang shar*⁸⁴, nine locations of nine drops are listed, but an explicit relation between this set of nine drops and the various drops mentioned above is not evident. Nonetheless, it is clear that except for the ninth drop these nine drops represent the Drop of Buddha (*sangs rgyas thig le*) at different levels of the body. Thus, this drop stays

1. as Drop of Completely Pure Buddha-Body (*rnam dag sku yi thig le*) in the heart,
2. as Drop of the Sign of Emptiness (*stong nyid rtags kyi thig le*) in the central channel,
3. as Drop of Blazing Emptiness and Clarity (*stong gsal 'bar ba'i thig le*) in the Channel of the Precious Threaded White Crystal,
4. As Good Drop of the Way (*lam gyi thig le bzang po*) in the Channel of the Precious White Silk Thread,
5. as Drop of Non-Dual Clear Light (*'od gsal gnyis med thig le*) in the Channel of the Precious Inherently Pure Emptiness,
6. as Inseparably United Drop (*'du 'bral med pa'i thig le*) in the vertebra,

7. as Drop of the Radiation of Pristine Cognition (*ye shes gdangs kyi thig le*) in the Skull Mansion of the brain,
8. as Drop of Completely Pure Light (*rnam dag 'od kyi thig le*) in the eyes,
9. and as Drop Arising in Diversity (*sna tshogs 'char ba'i thig le*) in Outer Space.

In whatever way these drops are arranged, two basic aspects always are discernible, namely drops dwelling in the channels of the body and drops projected outwardly, and both of them originate from the heart. Concerning the outwardly manifesting drops, divergent classifications can be identified in different *Rdzogs chen* Tantras, but all of them have in common that they denote an ever increasing intensification of the radiation of the Inner Space of the heart (*tsitta*) into the exterior.

The Sixth Theme

The doors by means of which Pristine Cognition arises

“The doors are the eyes.

Moreover, (there are channels) connecting the navel
with the heart and the heart with the throat.

From among the four channels which coil to the right in
the Skull Mansion of the brain (*klad pa dung khang*),
the One Which Causes the Arisal of the Sense
Objects (*dbang po yul la 'char byed pa'i rtsa*
branches from there into five tips which form the
support of the five doors (of the sense organs).

(As to the tip) called “the Channel Which Separates the
Faults From the Qualities of the Sense Organs”
(*skyon yon dbang po dwangs 'byed rtsa*): The
upper part of two of its branches is wide open and
their root is fine.

They resemble the horns of a buffalo-calf and are
based on the pure liquidity of the eye-pupils.

Since (the eyes) hold (on account of this tip) both,
samsara and nirvana, they have arisen as being half
white and half black and having the nature of water.

What is called “Lamp of the Water that Lassos
Everything At a Distance” (*rgyang zhag chu'i sgron
ma*) is in fact the eyes.

The Lamp of Empty Drops of Light (*thig le stong pa'i sgron ma*) which is based on (the eyes) arises like eyes of a peacock's feather.

Its radiation, the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space (*dbyings rnam par dag pa'i sgron ma*) arises in the form of the sign *na ro* (*yi ge na ro*).

Its potentiality, the Lamp of Self-Arisen Discriminative Awareness (*shes rab rang byung gi sgron ma*), arises as the various forms of the potentiality of consciousness.

From the *Brahmā*-aperture at the top of the head arises the Intelligence, being the non-conceptual Buddha-Body (*rig pa rtog pa med pa'i sku*).

Based on that, the Vision of the Immediate Perception of Reality Itself (*chos nyid mngon sum gyi snang ba*) can be established in the present time.

Therefore, the misconceptions of words of intellectual analysis are not required, because this is the pith of the Immediate Perception of Reality Itself, which is beyond the view of holding onto intellectual analysis.⁸⁵

- *Different fourfold sets of channels (rtsa bzhi):*

First, the identification of the Channel Which Separates the Faults From the Qualities of the Sense Organs (*skyon yon dbang po dwangs 'byed rtsa*) causes some problems, because a detailed description of it and its relationship to other

channels cannot be found in the text and other similar texts which I could consult.

As to the Palace of the Channels Initiating Movement (*'gyu byed rtsa yi gzhal yas*): A short description is available in the *TCZ*⁸⁶ where the names of its four channels - all of them seem to consist of more than one channel - are mentioned. Looking at this text makes it clear that the Channel Which is White, Smooth, and Empty (*dkar 'jam stong pa'i rtsa*), the Precious, Emanating Channel (*rin chen 'phro ba'i rtsa*), the Completely Liberating Channel (*rnam par grol byed rtsa*), and the Moving White Crystal Channel (*shel dkar rgyu ba'i rtsa*) must be light-channels. This is so on account of their explicit association with appearances initiated by Pristine Cognition (*ye shes kyi snang ba*). However, the course of these four channels is explained neither in the *TCZ* nor in the Tantra *Rig pa rang shar*⁸⁷ which *Klong chen rab 'byams* takes as source of his explanation of the Four Palaces (*gzhal yas bzhi*). In the *TCZ* it is merely said that the place of Pristine Cognition is the heart (*tsitta*) which could be the starting point of the channels of the Palace of the Channels Initiating Movement (*'gyu byed rtsa yi gzhal yas*).

Now, as to the Channel Which Separates the Faults From the Qualities of the Sense Organs (*skyon yon dbang po dwangs 'byed rtsa*) which penetrates the eyes and which is a tip of the Channel Which Causes the Arisal of the Sense Objects (*dbang po yul la 'char byed pa'i rtsa*): It seems to be logical to equate it with the Channel Having a Crystal Cavity (*shel sbug can*) which is one of the Four Especially Great Channels (*khyad par gyi rtsa chen bzhi*)⁸⁸, because both of them have the same shape. Among the five channels - see

below - it could be identified with the two channels White Silk Thread (*dar dkar snal ma*) and the Channel Which is Rolled Up In Subtlety (*'phra la 'dril*)⁸⁹.

Moreover, in the *Mu tig rin po che 'phreng ba'i rgyud* one of the channels of the Four Especially Great Channels, i.e., the One Rolled Up In Subtlety is replaced by the Channel Which Causes the Arisal of the Sense Objects (*dbang po yul la 'char byed pa'i rtsa*) which has as one of its five tips the Channel Which Separates the Faults From the Qualities of the Sense Organs (*skyon yon dbang po dwangs 'byed rtsa*).

Among the Four Principal Channels (*rtsa'i gtso bo bzhi*), it could be equated with the *ka ti shel gyi sbu gu can*. As to this fourfold set of channels, a concise description of it can be found in the *KDNYT*⁹⁰:

“Concerning the Four Principal Channels the Tantra
Sgra thal 'gyur says:

(These are the channels) “*ro ma*”, “*rkyang ma*”,
kun dhar ma”,
And “*ka ti shes gyi sbu gu can*”.

Concerning the (first of) the three principal channels
(the Tantra) *Klong gsal* says:

The channels “*ro ma*”, “*rkyang ma*”,
*kun dhar ma*⁹¹,
(Dwelling in) the middle of the five
energy-centres⁹²,
Are penetrating the doors of the sense organs.

Moreover, these three channels take their course from (energy-centre) the secret place (*gsang gnas*) up to the heart-(centre), and from there up to the throat-(centre).

Onwards from the throat, the principal (middle) channel proceeds to the crown of the head like a stake.

The two (other) ones branch into seven (additional) channels.

Two of them penetrate the two ears, two pierce the two nostrils, two go into the two eyes, and the last one plants itself into the tongue.

At the lower end, the three channels stick into “the secret place” (*gsang gnas*) and into the anus.

The secondary channels are pervading collectively the whole of the body.

In the middle one of the three (main channels) flows the Ultimate Drop (*don dam gyi thig le*).

Channels, winds, and drops constitute the way by means of which forms, sounds, odours, flavours, textures, bliss, suffering, equanimity, and appearances of Pristine Cognition (*ye shes kyi snang ba*) are arising.

In particular, with regard to the way of arising Pristine Cognition: The (fourth) channel has the size of about a white silk thread (*rtsa dar dkar gyi skud pa tsam*) and contains no blood and lymph.

Departing from the network (energy-centre) of the throat, it (finally) comes down (to the eyes) by leaving the brain.

Moreover, this channel is fine at its root and ample at its top (and) penetrates the two eyes like two buffalo-horns.

The appearances of Pristine Cognition are arising there like sun rays becoming visible through an open gallery.”

This set of four channels (*rtsa bzhi*) is presented in Tantras such as the *Sgra thal 'gyur* and the *Sgron ma 'bar ba*⁹³.

However, it is worth mentioning, that this kind of set is much more frequently met with in the *Snying thig ya bzhi* than in the *Rdzogs chen* Tantras of the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*.

In the second chapter of the Tantra *Sgron ma 'bar ba* an explanation of the clearly discerning Intelligence (*rig pa gsal gsal rig rig po*) dwelling in the channels *ro ma*, *rkyang ma*, *kun dhar ma* and *shel sbub khog pa stong pa* is given. On the other hand, in the third chapter one is told that the Lamp of Empty Drops of Light (*thig le stong pa'i sgron ma*) is predominantly present in the Four Especially Great Channels (*khyad par gyi rtsa chen bzhi*) all of which exclusively are light-channels.

Nevertheless, both of these two sets of four channels have in common that they assume a light-channel connecting the Inner Space to the Outer one through the medium of the body.

Therefore, they should not be considered as two sets excluding each other. About the function of the Four Principal Channels (*rtsa'i gtso bo bzhi*) there is a concise explanation in the *KDYT*⁹⁴:

“Moreover, it is at the time of relative truth, that - on account of ignorance (*ma rig pa*) - from among the three channels the left one provides the support for desire, the right one for hatred and the middle one for stupidity.

The Channel Having A Crystal-Cavity (*shel sbug can*) provides no support for anything being impure.

At the time of Ultimate Truth, everything is accomplished on account of Pristine Cognition, but in particular, the right (channel) is accomplished through method (*thabs kyi rang bzhin*), the left one through discriminative awareness (*shes rab kyi rang bzhin*), and the middle one through non-duality (*gnyis su med pa'i rang bzhin*)⁹⁵.

(At the time of) the way, the left one supports bliss (*bde ba*), the right one clarity (*gsal ba*), and the middle one non-conceptuality (*mi rtog pa*).

(At the time of) the result, the middle one supports the *dharmakāya* (*chos sku*), the right one the *sambhogakāya* (*longs sku*) and *nirmanakāya* (*sprul sku*), and the left one the Clear Light of great bliss which is encompassing the sky (*bde ba chen po 'od gsal nam mkha' mtha' khyab pa'i rten*).”

Interestingly, the left channel is not related to one of the Three Buddha-Bodies (*sku gsum*), but to the Clear Light of great bliss. This points to the fact that in *Rdzogs chen* thinking the Buddha-Bodies rather are looked at as appearances of the way (*lam gyi snang ba*) than as result⁹⁶. Moreover, in a passage of the *YTMDZ* which consists mainly of a lengthy

quotation of the *TCZ*, one finds a distinction between the Three Buddha-Bodies as Three Bodies of the inner clarity (*nang gsal gyi sku gsum*) which are considered to be aspects of the *dharmakāya* (*chos sku*) and the Three Buddha-Bodies as appearances of the way (*lam snang*). *Klong chen rab 'byams* mentions that ancient teachers confirm that they only are not accounted for as result in order to avoid the danger of clinging to them as something ultimate (*sku gsum du zhen pa'i mthar 'dzin*). Nevertheless, it is wrong to establish them ultimately as result, because one takes not account of the essence of the Inner Space of primordial purity⁹⁷.

Below, after having described the course of the first three channels, *Klong chen rab 'byams* emphasizes the point that one has to discern well the top part of the *rkyang ma* and the light-channel. Both of them penetrate the eyes, but the *rkyang ma* supports the eye-consciousness which is aware of forms, whereas the Golden Channel Which Posseses a Crystal Cavity (*ka ti shel gyi sbu gu can*) facilitates the arising of the radiation of the Clear Light (*'od gsal gyi gdangs*)⁹⁸.

The origin of these four channels is elucidated in the *KDNYT*⁹⁹. Unfortunately, the Elementary Force which corresponds to the the middle channel - the *kun dhar ma* - is not mentioned in this text. Thus, at the time of relative reality, the potential of Pristine Cognition solidifies itself as Elementary Forces on account of ignorance, thereby initiating the formation of a physical body. During this formation the *ro ma* is generated by the essence of water (*chu'i dangs ma*), the *rkyang ma* by the essence of earth (*sa'i dangs ma*), and the *shel sbug can* by the essence of fire (*me'i dangs ma*).

In the Tantra *Rgyud chen dri med zla shel*¹⁰⁰ is an

explanation of the highly energetic and less energetic aspects of the Elementary Forces (*'byung lnga dangs snyigs dbye ba dang gnas tshul zur tsam bshad pa*). Here the *ka ti* light-channel, which seems in this context to be identical with the *shel sbug can* is not related to fire, but stands for the highly energetic aspect of earth as it manifests itself in the human body. The less energetic aspect of the earth is said to be the bodily constituents of flesh, bones, hairs, and skin.

As mentioned above, the set of Four Especially Channels¹⁰¹ which at least since the time of *Klong chen rab 'byams* is propagated widely is only one of the different sets presented in the *Rdzogs chen* Tantras. The most important source of this set seems to be the Tantra *Gser gyi me tog mdzes pa rin po che'i sgron ma 'bar ba'i rgyud*. In its third chapter these four channels are related to four kinds of light-drops (*thig le*)¹⁰²:

1. The Good Drop of the Ground (*gzhi yi thig le bzang po*) flowing inside the Great Golden Channel (*ka ti gser gyi rtsa chen*),
2. the Good Drop of the Way (*lam gyi thig le bzang po*) flowing inside the Channel Which Is Like a White Silk Thread (*dar dkar snal ma lta bu'i rtsa*),
3. the Top of the Good Ones (*bzang po rnams kyi rtse mo*) flowing inside the One Rolled Up In Subtlety (*'phra la 'dril*), and
4. the One Possessing Good Ornaments (*bzang po'i rgyan dang ldan pa*) flowing inside the One Having A Crystal Cavity (*shel sbug can*).

This standard set of light-channels is also presented in the fifth chapter of the *Theg pa kun gyi spyi phud klong chen rab 'byam gyi rgyud*¹⁰³ where it is emphasized that these channels are naturally present (*rang gnas*) in the body, being not created by anything.

As mentioned above, a slightly different fourfold set is put forth in the *Mu tig rin po che 'phreng ba'i rgyud*⁸³ where the "One Rolled Up In Subtlety" (*'phra la 'dril*) is replaced by the "Channel Which Lets Arise the Objects To the Sense Organs" (*dbang po yul la 'char byed rtsa*).

In the *Rig pa rang shar chen po'i rgyud* one finds two fourfold sets. The first one¹⁰⁵ consists of:

1. The Great Golden Channel (*ka ti gser gyi rtsa chen*),
2. the One Being an Empty Crystal-Cavity (*shel gyi sbug gu khongs pa stong*),
3. the White Silk Thread Rolled Up In Subtlety (*dar dkar snal ma 'phra la 'khyil*), and
4. the Great Channel of Empty Self-Liberation (*stong pa rang grol rtsa chen po*).

The second set¹⁰⁶ is the set called "Palace of the Channels Initiating Movement" (*'gyu byed rtsa yi gzhal yas*):

1. The Channels Being White, Smooth and Empty (*dkar 'jam stong pa'i rtsa dag*),
2. the Precious Emanating Channels (*rin chen 'phro ba'i rtsa rnams*),

3. the Completely Liberating Great Channels (*rnam par grol byed rtsa chen*), and
4. the Moving White Crystal Channels (*shel dkar rgyu ba'i rtsa dag*).

As to the collection Four Branches of the Heart Essence (*Snying thig ya bzhi*), the most common set of four light-channels is only met with in the *ZMYT*¹⁰⁷, where they serve as usual as carriers of light-drops and of the wind of Pristine Cognition (*ye shes kyi rlung*)¹⁰⁸. In the other texts of this collection, the usual three channels found in many Buddhist tantric texts - *ro ma*, *rkyang ma* and *kun dhar ma* - are presented, adding in the context of the practice of Leaping Over (*thod rgal*) as fourth one the Golden One Which Possesses a Crystal Cavity (*ka ti shel gyi sbu gu can*).

In order to know more about the most common set of four light-channels, one has to examine the relevant passages found in the *GTHZ*, the *TDZ* and the *TCZ*. Thus, the following is written in the *GTHZ*¹⁰⁹ about their function and the course taken by them inside the body:

“Moreover, among the Four Channels Which Are Especially Great (*khyad par chen po'i rtsa bzhi*) on account of the Clear Light dwelling in them, there is the Great Golden Channel (*ka ti gser gyi rtsa chen*) which resides in the centre of the middle channel and which connects this (channel) with the middle of the heart.

It is filled up with the Drop of Samantabhadra (*kun tu bzang po'i thig le*).

The label “Channel Which Resembles a White Silk Thread” (*dar dkar snal ma lta bu'i rtsa*) is given to the light- channel which is directed upwards to the aperture of *Brahmā* (*tshangs bug*)⁸⁹.

(Inside it is) the Drop Which Lets Enter Into the Way Of the Unborn Reality Itself (*chos nyid skye med kyi lam du 'jug pa'i thig le*), (and) the Non-Conceptual Buddha-Body of Intelligence (*rig pa rtog med kyi sku*) is dependent on it for its arising.

(In addition to that, it provides) the way for the training of the transference of consciousness (*rnam shes 'pho ba*).

As to the One Rolled Up In Subtlety” (*'phra la 'dril*):

(Passing) through the middle of the four energy-centres, it serves as support of the Clear Light.

(Inside it) dwell the Drop of the Top of the Good Ones (*bzang po rnam kyi rtse mo*), five-coloured light-rays and small drops (*thig phran*).

The One Having a Crystal-Cavity (*shel sbug can*) connects the heart with the eyes.

(Inside it dwells the Drop) Possessing Good Ornaments (*bzang po'i rgyan dang ldan pa*) and it supports innumerable appearances of *Vajra-Chains* (*rdo rje lu gu rgyud*).”

There are four drops mentioned in *GTHZ* :

1. The Drop of Samantabhadra (*kun tu bzang po'i thig le*),

2. the Drop Which Lets Enter Into the Way Of the Unborn Reality Itself (*chos nyid skye med kyi lam du 'jug pa'i thig le*),
3. the Drop of the Top of the Good Ones (*bzang po rname kyi rtse mo*), and
4. the Drop Possessing Good Ornaments (*bzang po'i rgyan dang ldan pa*)

It should be noted that these drops are not completely identical with the ones presented in the Tantra *Sgron ma 'bar ba*. However, according to the *TDZ*¹¹ the same four channels, i.e., the Four Especially Great Channels locate the four kinds of drops (*thig le*) mentioned in this Tantra. Moreover, the nature of these four drops is here clearly elucidated:

1. The Good Drop of the Ground (*gzhi'i thig le bzang po*) represents essence, nature, and compassion and is inside the Great Golden Channel (*ka ti gser gyi rtse chen*).
2. The Good Drop of the Way (*lam gyi thig le bzang po*) dwells together with the Four Lamps inside the Channel of White Silk Thread (*dar dkar snal ma lta bu'i rtse*) which is especially related to the right side of the water-lamp (*chu'i sgron ma*).
3. The Top of the Good Ones (*bzang po rname kyi rtse mo*) is to be found in the Channel Rolled Up In Subtlety" (*'phra la 'dril*) connecting the heart with the left side of the water-lamp and being responsible for the

various aspects of the Vision of Increasing Experiences
(*nyams gong 'phel gyi snang ba*).

4. Even though not explicitly mentioned, the One Possessing Good Ornaments (*bzang po'i rgyan dang ldan pa*) is located in the Channel Having A Crystal-Cavity (*shel sbug can*) which supports the Vision of the Intelligence Reaching Its Peak (*rig pa tshad phebs kyi snang ba*).

As already mentioned, in addition, there is a fifth light-channel, called “Empty Self-Liberation” (*stong pa rang grol*) which is set forth in the *TDZ*. Thus, in the following quotation from the *TDZ*¹² it is explained why one is talking sometimes rather about five than four light-channels. According to *Klong chen rab 'byams*, one is emphasizing the connection between them and the Four Lamps (*sgron ma bzhi*) when talking about four channels. On the other hand, with a set of five channels one is stressing their relation to the five aspects of Pristine Cognition (*ye shes lnga*). Unfortunately, it is neither elucidated which one of the four channels is related to which of the Four Lamps, nor is it said which one of the five channels refers to which aspect of Pristine Cognition:

“Moreover, the Great Golden Channel (*ka ti gser gyi rtsa chen*) which (takes its course) from the heart is (in its) essence self-existing (*rang byung*) (and) displays the radiation of light (*'od gdangs*).

The Channel having A Crystal-Cavity (*shel sbug can*) lights up the radiation of Pristine Cognition inside the life-channel (*srog rtsa*), and although the Channel of

White Silk Thread and the One Which Is Rolled Up In Subtlety (*dar dkar snal ma 'phra la 'dril*) are said to be a single bunch on account of being identical in letting arise outer appearances, the White Silk Thread and the One Which Is Rolled Up In Subtlety have to be accounted for as two.

The light-channel which penetrates the right eye is the White Silk Thread and the one penetrating the left one is the One Which Is Rolled Up In Subtlety.

Not only that, the upright inner channel Which Is Rolled Up In Subtlety branches itself into four (channels), thus facilitating the permeation of each of the middle of the four energy-centres through the radiation of (this) light-channel.

That is why in some (texts) it is said that there is no channel (called) “Empty Self-Liberation” (*stong pa rang grol*).

As for (the channel) Empty Self-Liberation, it (takes its course) inside the middle channel, (finally) penetrates the Aperture of *Brahmā* and provides in this manner the way for the absorption of the Non-Conceptual Buddha-Body of Intelligence (*rig pa rtog med kyi sku*) into (Outer) Space.

Thus, the five light-channels (*'od rtsa lnga*) are connected with the five aspects of Pristine Cognition. However, when one is taking four into account, they are related to the Four Lamps.”

Despite all divergencies concerning the sets of light-channels and the light-drops dwelling in them, they have in common that

they show how the light present in the heart takes its way into Outer Space. In this process, the eye plays an important role as last link connecting the body with Outer Space. As is well known, the eye sometimes is called “Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a Distance” (*rgyang zhag chu'i sgron ma*) in the context of the Leaping Over (*thod rgal*). However, this equation is, as will be seen, not to be taken too literally, because it is actually not the physical organ that is meant by it but rather the light-channels which are penetrating the eye.

The text gives preference to a fourfold set of lamps (*sgron ma bzhi*). This set seems to have made its first appearance in the Tantra *Sgron ma 'bar ba* which is used by *Klong chen rab 'byams* as base for his elucidation of lamps. In the first chapter of this Tantra, one finds a summary of the Four Lamps, followed by an extensive explanation of the Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a Distance (*rgyang zhag chu'i sgron ma*). The second chapter deals with the Lamp of Self-Arisen Discriminative Awareness (*shes rab rang byung gi sgron ma*), the third one with the Lamp of Empty Drops of Light (*thig le stong pa'i sgron ma*) and the fourth one with the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space (*dbyings rnam par dag pa'i sgron ma*). What follows now is a summary of each of these four chapters.

- *Summary of the first chapter of the Tantra*

Sgron ma 'bar ba:

In the introductory part of the first chapter which is called “extraordinary introduction” (*thun mong ma yin pa'i gleng gzhi*) there is a summary of the whole Tantra¹¹³:

“Homage to the Conquerer “Self-Arisal of Glorious Appearances”!

Thus I have taught once:

In the *maṇḍala* - being the ground of emptiness itself -
which is arising without limit,

The great appearance which neither is distinct nor
different from the mode of the great undividedness is
perfectly arranged.

In the ground of ever present great self-clarity

Which is the self-arisen sphere (*glong*) of the action
of great appearance,

The unceasing Intelligence has naturally arisen and has
proclaimed the inexpressible meaning, proclaims it
(now) and will it proclaim (in future).”

Although an elucidation of the name “Conquerer Self-Arisal of Glorious Appearances” (*Bcom ldan 'das dpal snang ba rang shar ba*) is not given here, it seems to be clear that this name refers to the totality of the appearances of the Leaping Over (*thod rgal*). In the notes (*mchan*) to this passage, the arisal in and of the ground is said to display the Five Excellent Aspects (*phun sum tshogs pa lnga*). Thus, the empty ground

is the excellent place (*gnas*), the excellent retinue (*'khor*) is the great appearance, the teacher (*ston pa*) refers to Intelligence itself, and the teaching (*bstan pa*) to its inexpressible meaning¹¹⁴. Here, the ground is not defined as merely being empty of any conceptuality, but is explained as having the quality of clarity which is its ever present potential of spontaneously perfect appearance. The undividedness of these two aspects - often referred to as “inseparable union of primordial purity and spontaneous perfection” (*ka dag lhun grub dbyer med*) - lights up a sphere (*klong* or *glong*) in which Intelligence (*rig pa*) displays itself as great appearance.

The following quotation from the common introductory part (*thun mong gi gleng gzhi*) again is presented through the Five Excellent Aspects¹¹⁵, but is easier to understand than the uncommon one. Here, the teacher “Great *Vajra*-Holder Of Completely Pure Appearances” (*Snang ba rnam par dag pa'i rdo rje 'chang chen*) proclaims that even though Intelligence appears without interruption, it is not recognized as Pristine Cognition. However, this temporarily invisible Pristine Cognition arises forever as Pristine Cognition in the form of lamps which are said to be like beautiful flowers. Further down one finds the statement that the Four Lamps are taking hold of anything that appears to living beings, and as conclusion of the first part of the first chapter one is presented an initial short summary of the distinct functions of the Four Lamps¹¹⁶:

“In the whole of the world,
Intelligence is self-arising without interruption,
But no one is seeing that at all.

The one who will see the invisible great Pristine

Cognition,

Will see in it beautiful flowers.

Forever self-arising as Pristine Cognition of the

lamps themselves,

The invisible Pristine Cognition which has to be seen

Arises as *Vajra-Core* (*rdo rje snying po*).

Onwards from the very moment of its arising it can

no longer decline.

As to this great treasure of Pristine Cognition which is

without decline:

Whoever is practising it, is a Fortunate One.

Being endowed with a wholesome character,

(Such a person) is free of even the slightest trace of

unwholesomeness.

(His) Self-Intelligence (*rang rig*) which is lacking such

traces is disassociated from conventional

designations (*tha snyad*) and terms.

Together, the Four Lamps

Are taking hold of the appearances of all sentient

beings.

The Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a

Distance (*rgyang zhag chu'i sgron ma*)

Is gathering forms, etc., into the essence itself.

The Lamp of Self-Arisen Discriminative Awareness

(*shes rab rang byung gi sgron ma*)

Cuts off the doubts about the (spiritual) vehicles.

The Lamp of Empty Drops of Light (*thig le stong pa'i*

sgron ma) delimits the mixture of samsara and

nirvana.

The Lamp of Utterly Pure Space (*dbyings rnam par dag pa'i sgron ma*) sows the seed for yogic experiences.

All of them are particular appearances.”

The second part of this chapter contains a detailed explanation of the Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a Distance (*rgyang zhag chu'i sgron ma*). Here, the general features of this lamp are dealt with first¹¹⁷:

“E Ma! *Vajra*-Holder of Pure Tantras!

When I am envisaging outside the very appearances
of the Four Lamps,

They all gradually appear as objects of the mind.

The Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a
Distance

Is seizing (thus) the threefold appearance
(*snang gsum*)¹¹⁸.

Due to it its seizing the threefold appearance,
the view (becomes) the core of everything.

Because everything that is seen, is seen through it,

It is - similar to a seed that generates (a plant) -
Present as generator of the apprehension of the
ground of the view.”

Then follows the detailed explanation of this lamp which is given in accordance with the main commentary to this Tantra, i.e., the thirteenth chapter of the *TCZ*, where it is presented in nine sections¹¹⁹.

1. Essence (*ngo bo*):

Its essence consists of the fact that it is aware of both, i.e., of pure, nirvanic visions as well as of deceitful samsaric visions. This envisaging takes place with the help of the physical organ - the eyes - and by means of the light-channel supported by the physical organ.

2. Definition (*nges pa'i tshig*):

Its definition is given by means of the explanation of the individual syllables of the term *rgyang zhag chu'i sgron ma* . Thus, the syllable *rgyang* - “distance” - represents its capability to perceive from afar forms of the Clear Light as for instance five-colored light-drops, and deceitful appearances as for instance earth or stones. On the one hand, it flings deceitful appearances and deceitful thinking associated with them far away. On the other hand, however, it also flings nirvana far away, if the appearances projected by it into Outer Space are not recognised as self-appearances.

The syllable *zhags* - “lasso” - stands for its capability to tie up impure appearances by means of experiencing them as self-appearances. But again, *zhags* also symbolizes the Self-Intelligence (*rang rig*) being tied up on account of attachment to deceitful appearances. *Klong chen rab 'byams* compares this ambiguous state of affairs with a rope. A rope seems to have the power to bind or tie together anything. However, broken down to its individual fibers, the rope and its seemingly real power to tie up is no longer detectable.

According to *Klong chen rab 'byams*, the same applies to the

deceitful appearances and the thinking associated with it: If these appearances are analyzed, they turn out to be empty of any base, thus revealing their true nature. If not examined, these appearances seem to tie up Self-Intelligence (*rang rig*). In reality, however, not even at the time of the appearance of something that ties up, was such a thing existing.

Consequently, there is nothing which is untied or liberated at the time of something being untied, because that which ties up has no ultimate reality. A further signification of the syllable *zhags* refers to its capability to seize the nirvanic self-appearances (*rang snang*).

The syllable *chu* - “water” - points at the power of this lamp to increase nirvanic visions by means of meditative absorption which is free of attachment. It refers also to the assumption that this visionary process is based upon the so called “ essence of water”, which in this context is a paraphrase for the physical eye.

The syllable *sgron* - “lamp” - stands for the capability of this lamp to let appear samsaric forms in perfect distinctiveness and to intensify the lighting up of pure appearances.

The syllable *ma* finally, points at its power to constitute the base of the visions arising as an Inseparability of Space and Intelligence (*dbyings rig dbyer med*). In addition, this syllable represents also the eyes in the sense that they form the base for the perception of whatever is perceived as form.

3. Classifications (*dbye ba*):

1. The first of the three different aspects of this lamp is called “Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a

Distance Which Is Composed of Elementary Forces”

(*'byung ba 'dus pa'i rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma*).

It refers to a channel which resembles a buffalo-horn and is said to represent the essence of the Elementary Force wind. As mentioned in the text, this aspect takes part in the perception of both, nirvanic and samsaric appearances.

2. The second aspect, the One Which Is Composed of the Aspects of Pristine Cognition (*ye shes 'dus pa'i rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma*), is a light-channel which apprehends the colours of Pristine Cognition, but no deceitful appearances.
3. The third aspect, the One Which Is Composed of the Essence of the Five Sense-Consciousnesses (*dbang po 'dus pa'i rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma*), is the physical sense organ dwelling in the middle of the eye which is perceiving only samsaric appearances.

As *Klong chen rab 'byams* mentions, only the aspect called “the One Which Is Composed of the Aspects of Pristine Cognition” is the real Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a Distance. The two other ones form merely the base for it. Unfortunately, the question why the first aspect seizes samsaric and nirvanic visions rests unanswered. Moreover, the names of the two channels mentioned here remain unknown and a clear distinction between them is not drawn.

4. Characteristics (*mtshan nyid*):

This lamp is generally characterised by its capability to apprehend form, and therefore it opens up the possibility of the appearance of visual objects. Its three specific characteristics are directly related to the three aspects mentioned above:

1. The aspect which is composed of the Elementary Forces (*'byung ba 'dus pa'i rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma*)¹²⁰ is characterised by its power to absorb objects, i.e., by its power to let arise the concentration of the eye consciousness on its objects. As such it lays the foundation for the apprehension of the objects of the eye-consciousness.
2. The specific characteristic of the second aspect, i.e., of the One Which Is Composed of the Aspects of Pristine Cognition (*ye shes 'dus pa'i rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma*) is its capacity to seize exclusively the self-appearances of the Clear Light (*'od gsal gyi rang snang*).
3. The third aspect, the One Which Is Composed of the Essence Of the Five Sense-Consciousnesses (*dbang po 'dus pa'i rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma*), is characterised by three components: appearances (*snang ba*), appearing objects (*snang yul*)¹²¹ and eye-consciousness (*mig gi rnam shes*).

5. Place (*gnas*):

To put it simply, its place is the eyes. As mentioned in the Fifth Theme, two eyes, namely the Eye of the Elementary Forces (*'byung ba'i spyan*) and the Eye of the Lamps (*sgron ma'i spyan*), are generated during the early formation of the body:

1. The first one is by nature physical, being produced first in the energy-centre of the navel and then, in ascending order, in the heart-centre, in the throat and finally in the crown-centre¹²². It is responsible for the formation of the whole physical body and in the *YTMDZ*, it is even explicitly equated with the physical eye¹²³.
2. The Eye of the Lamps arises likewise in all four energy-centres. It initiates the generation of the binary light-channel which resembles a buffalo-horn and which makes possible the arising of the appearances of the Clear Light (*'od gsal gyi snang ba*). The actual place of the Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a Distance (*rgyang zhag chu'i sgron ma*) is inside this channel which by nature contains no blood and no pus and which penetrates the eyes.

6. Origin (*thog ma gang gis skyed pa*):

As explained in the Fifth Theme, this lamp originates in the generating first energy-centre (*skye byed dang po'i 'khor lo*) during the formation of an embryo.

7. Door of Arising (*'char ba'i sgo*):

The door for its arising is the eye. Strictly speaking, it is the binary light-channel which penetrates the eyes.

8. Analogy (*dpe*):

Similar to a hook that can seize everything, this lamp too, has the power to seize without discrimination all samsaric and nirvanic visions.

9. Signs (*tshad*):

Here, the three signs of the three aspects of this lamp - see the sections "Classifications " and "Characteristics" - are discussed:

1. The sign of the full experience of the aspect called “the One Which Is Composed of Elementary Forces”
(*'byung ba 'dus pa'i rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma*)
refers to the perfected capability to absorb (*sdud*) and expand (*mched*) objects.
2. The completed vision of the *Vajra-Chains* (*rdo rje lu gu rgyud*) represents the sign of the full experience of the aspect called “the One Which Is Composed of the Aspects of Pristine Cognition” (*ye shes 'dus pa'i rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma*).
3. The awareness which perfectly discriminates (*shes rab*) whatever is appearing, is taken as sign of the full experience of the aspect called “the One Which Is

Composed of the Essence of the Five Sense-
Consciousnesses” (*dbang po ‘dus pa’i rgyang zhags
chu’i sgron ma*)¹²⁴.

- *Summary of the second chapter of the Tantra
Sgron ma ‘bar ba:*

In the second chapter there follows a detailed explanation of the Lamp of Self-Arisen Discriminative Awareness (*shes rab rang byung gi sgron ma*). By the way, it should be noted that *Klong chen rab ‘byams* treats this lamp in his *TCZ* not in the second, but in the fourth section of the chapter dealing with the Four Lamps (*sgron ma bzhi*).

1. Essence (*ngo bo*):

Essentially, this lamp represents the agent which knows or is aware (*shes byed*) of the Four Lamps. Being defined as empty and clear (*stong gsal*) it is endowed with the potential of Intelligence (*rig pa’i rtsal*), i.e., with the power to let arise samsaric visions as well as nirvanic ones. It knows the nature of things just as they are (*ji lta ba mkhyen pa’i ye shes*) and perceives whatever there is (*ji snyed pa gzigs pa’i ye shes*) non-conceptually, but in every detail. This knowledge is present as this lamp forever and it flows out of the inner sphere (*klong rdol*) by applying the specific methods (*thabs*) consisting of the three other lamps. As it were, these three lamps are thought of as the outer aspect of the Four

Lamps¹²⁵ and as such they are based on the inner lamp, i.e., the Lamp of Self-Arisen Discriminative Awareness which is the common ground of them.

2. Definition (*nges pa'i tshig*):

Analogous to the definition of the first lamp, its definition is given by means of the explanation of the individual syllables of the term *shes rab rang byung gi sgron ma*. Thus, the syllable *shes* denotes the knowledge of the Intention of spontaneous or effortless perfection (*lhun grub gyi dgongs pa*) which understands the outwardly arising appearances as completely transparent self-appearance (*rang snang zang thal*). Thus, it beholds everything as empty of a self (*bdag med*) and, in particular, it is in full possession of every aspect of Pristine Cognition.

The syllable *rab* - “excellent” - symbolizes the preciousness of this lamp. It cannot be searched for, because it is only found without any intention to do so.

The assumption that it is forever present in oneself (*rang gnas*) is expressed by the syllable *rang* - “self” -.

The syllable *byung* - “arisen” - illustrates that its arising or manifestation is initiated by itself without there being any obstruction (*rang shar 'gag med du byung ba*).

Its lucid comprehension of whatever arises is symbolized by the syllable *sgron* - “lamp” -.

The syllable *ma* - “mother” - is expressive of the assumption that the innermost being of the self-appearance is imbued with Intelligence and known by it.

3. Classifications (*dbye ba*):

This lamp consists of five aspects:

1. The Self-Arisen Discriminative Awareness Which Holds to the Ground (*gzhi gnas rang byung gi shes rab*) denotes the discriminative awareness which is present as inseparable union of primordial purity and spontaneous perfection (*ka dag lhun grub dbyer med*) in the time before the ground arises in Outer Space.
2. The Discriminative Awareness Which Nakedly Seizes Appearances (*snang ba cer 'dzin gyi shes rab*), is directly related to the practice of Leaping Over (*thod rgal*), because it refers to the Union of Space and Intelligence (*dbyings rig zung 'jug*) which is at the core of this practice. It is said, that the pure self-clarity (*rang gsal dag pa*) being present at the time of the Union of Space and Intelligence takes one directly to Reality Itself (*chos nyid*).
3. Directly related to the practice of Cutting Through (*khregs chod*) is the Discriminative Awareness Which Remembers Without Interruption (*dran pa 'gag med kyi shes rab*). Whatever is arising to it is liberated by itself, i.e., it dissolves itself in its own essence (*rang ngo*) which is Reality Itself.
4. The Discriminative Awareness Which Individually Analyses (*so sor rtog pa'i shes rab*) represents the power of differentiation between things such as subject and object or general and specific characteristics without confounding them.

5. The three phases of studying, thinking and meditating (*thos bsam sgom gsum*) which manifest during our life, i.e., during the so called “Natural Intermediate State” (*rang bzhin gyi bar do*), are subsumed here as Discriminative Awareness Consisting of the Three Aspects Which Make One Enter Into Practice” (*jug byed nam gsum gyi shes rab*).

4. Characteristics (*mtshan nyid*):

This lamp is characterised by its awareness which knows that everything is lacking inherent existence (*rang bzhin med pa*).

5. Door (*sgo*):

1. The general door of this lamp is the five sense-organs (*dbang po lnga*), because the evaluation of the diversity of sense-objects transmitted by them is a function of discriminative awareness.
2. The specific door, however, is said to be the nose. The reason for it is the assumption that at the time of the first stirring of the wind which serves as horse of discriminative awareness (*shes rab kyi rta rlung*), the discriminative awareness departs from the heart (*tsitta*) and takes its course up to the nose.
The unmistakable sign (*rtags*) of the radiation of discriminative awareness (*shes rab kyi gdangs*) is said

to be a sensation of sparks of fire when one is violently sneezing during the night.

6. Place (*gnas*):

Its principal place is the Four Especially Great Channels (*khyad par chen po'i rtsa bzhi*) radiating out of the middle of the heart. *Klong chen rab 'byams* speaks in this section about the phase during which the inner clarity (*nang gsal*) is moving out of the primordial ground and is manifesting itself as outer clarity (*phyi gsal*), because the action of discriminative awareness is of decisive importance in this phase. When this lamp - it is mainly present as ever available radiation (*ye gdangs*) in the Four Especially Great Channels - is seized by the wind, it exteriorizes itself not yet, but its clarity is slightly dimmed¹²⁶. Thereafter, when this radiation is arising as outer play (*phyir rtsal*) on account of the stirring of the karmic wind (*las rlung*), outer objects apprehended as separate from discriminative awareness arise.

On the other hand, the same outer clarity also arises as appearances of Buddha-Bodies and Pristine Cognition. Of decisive importance in this phase is only the capability to recognize the spontaneous arising of the ground as self-appearance (*rang snang*). If it is not recognized as such, discriminative awareness gets mixed up with mind (*sems*) which always is associated with the karmic wind.

Both aspects of outer clarity have their origin in the heart (*tsitta*) which contains the inner clarity qualified by its basic characteristic of not being limited to either samsara or nirvana.

What will be outer clarity is taking its way out of the heart by means of the four light-channels mentioned above and constitutes, as it were, the border-line between samsara and nirvana.

7. Signs (*tshad*):

1. The sign of the full measure of the experience of the first aspect of discriminative awareness called “Self Arisen Discriminative Awareness Which Holds to the Ground” (*gzhi gnas rang byung gi shes rab*) is felt as continual resting in the identity (*mnyam pa*) of all that is. The term “identity” does not imply an identity of good and evil, but refers to an experience of essential sameness pervading the diversity of perception and is initiated through abstaining from classifying appearances in rigid categories.
2. The second aspect, i.e., the Discriminative Awareness Which Nakedly Seizes Appearances (*snang ba cer 'dzin gyi shes rab*), is fully experienced when the five-coloured light present in the heart is effortlessly arising in the Outer Space, eliciting thus one's emancipation (*rang dbang thob*) from samsara.
3. The full experience of the third aspect named “Discriminative Awareness Which Remembers Without Interruption” (*dran pa 'gag med kyi shes rab*), is explained as follows: When there is no intermediate Space between the proliferation of thoughts and their dissolution (*'du 'phro med pa*), it is impossible that the

awareness is separated from its dwelling in the intention of spontaneously perfect, natural composure (*rang dal lhun grub kyi dgongs pa*).

4. The fourth one, called “Discriminative Awareness That Individually Analyses” (*so sor rtog pa'i shes rab*), is made fully accessible after having examined all that presents itself as diversity of dualistic appearances, thereby recognizing their essence as being the emptiness of any inherent nature. In the context of the Leaping Over (*thod rgal*), this awareness is understood as being the cause of the separation of mind (*sems*) and Pristine Cognition (*ye shes*). On account of it, rough dualistic appearances are spontaneously blocked and the *Vajra-Chains* (*rdo rje lu gu rgyud*) arise without hindrance.
5. When the meaning of words is realized, and one is dwelling in what is called “the very essence of what is meant” (*don rang ngo la gnas pa*), the full experience of the fifth aspect called “Discriminative Awareness Consisting of the Three Aspects Which Make One Enter Into Practice” (*'jug byed rnam gsum gyi shes rab*) is achieved.

8. *Analogy* (*mthun dpe*):

The understanding (*rtogs pa*) of whatever is, the discriminative awareness which reduces all afflictions (*nyon mongs*) to ashes, is likened to a fire which easily inflames a dry wick.

- *Summary of the third chapter of the Tantra*

Sgron ma 'bar ba:

This chapter contains a detailed explanation of The Lamp of Empty Drops of Light (*thig le stong pa'i sgron ma*) dealt with in the second section of the chapter about the Four Lamps (*sgron ma bzhi*) in the TCZ.

1. Essence (*ngo bo*):

Klong chen rab 'byams defines its essence as self-clarity (*rang gsal*) arising in the Outer Space as light-drops surrounded by five-coloured light. The term “self-clarity” makes it clear that the transformation of inner into outer clarity (*phyi gsal*) is accomplished without the influence of other factors. Thus, it occurs in the manner of a self-transformation retaining the inseparable union of emptiness and clarity (*stong gsal dbyer med*) of the ground. Moreover, the term “self” refers to the fact that the arising of the outer light is only seen by oneself, i.e., by someone who applies the instructions of Leaping Over.

2. Definition (*nges pa'i tshig*):

In accordance with the definition of the two preceding lamps, this lamp too, is defined by means of elucidating the meaning of the individual syllables of its name. Thus, the syllable *thig* - “circle” - represents the constancy of the round five-coloured light which forever is free of any modification (*ye nas bcos pa nyid dang bral*).

The spontaneous perfection of appearances arising as great outer display is pointed at by the syllable *le*.

The two syllables *stong pa* - “empty” - stand for the fact that the processes associated with this lamp are not to be taken as something concrete (*dnegos po ngos zung du med pa*).

The potential of the ground to light up in five-coloured self-light (*rang ‘od*) is symbolized by the two syllables *sgron ma* signifying “lamp”¹²⁷.

3. Classifications (*dbye ba*):

This lamp possesses five aspects:

1. The Abiding Drop of the Ground (*gnas pa gzhi’i thig le*),
2. the Drop of the Channel Abiding In the Body (*lus gnas rtsa’i thig le*),
3. the Relative Causal Drop (*kun rdzobs rgyu’i thig le*),
4. the Ultimate Conceptless Drop (*don dam spros pa med pa’i thig le*), and
5. the Drop of the Self-Arisen Result (*rang byung ‘bras bu’i thig le*).

The Abiding Drop of the Ground corresponds to the Drop Holding Onto the Ground of the Tantra *Nyi zla kha sbyor* and the Drop of the Channel Abiding In the Body, the Relative Causal Drop, and the Ultimate Conceptless Drop can be classified in accordance with this Tantra¹²⁸ as Drop of the Way With Its Visions (*snang ba lam gyi thig le*).

The Drop of the Channel Abiding In the Body, however, is not mentioned in this Tantra. According to *Klong chen rab 'byams*, it lights up itself (*rang gsal*) in the Four Especially Great Channels as ever present Self-Liberation of the duality of pleasure and pain.

The Drop of the Self-Arisen Result, finally, corresponds to the Drop Ripening Itself into the Result (*'bras bu rang smin pa'i thig le*) of the Tantra *Nyi zla kha sbyor*.

4. Characteristics (*mtshan nyid*):

It is the continual meditation (*bsam gtan*) on the incomparable emptiness manifesting in the Outer Space as object of the eyes which characterises this lamp. Here, the term “Incomparable emptiness” denotes an emptiness suffused by clarity being perceptible as light-drops.

5. Place (*gnas*):

Its principal place is the Four Especially Great Channels (*khyad par chen po'i rtsa bzhi*) mentioned above.

6. Door (*sgo*):

As a matter of fact, the eye¹²⁹ is the door of all of the Four Lamps. Nothingtheless, the eye is considered in particular as door of the Lamp of Empty Drops of Light (*thig le stong pa'i sgron ma*), because this lamp is primarily associated with the visual experience of the Four Lamps.

Furthermore, in the Tantra *Sgron ma 'bar ba* it is also said that the Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a Distance and the Lamp of Self-Arisen Discriminative Awareness use the right eye as door, whereas the Lamp of Empty Drops of Light and the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space have the left one as their door. The Body of Intelligence (*rig pa'i sku*), i.e., the *Vajra-Chains* (*rdo rje lu gu rgyud*), manifests through the Aperture of *Brahmā* (*tshangs bug*). It should be noted in this context that the physical eye is by no means a condition *sine qua non* for the perception of light-drops, because these drops are also seen in utter darkness.

7. Nature (*rang bzhin*):

According to *Klong chen rab 'byams*, these light-drops represent the spontaneously perfect Clear Light (*'od gsal lhun grub*) and as such they have the originally pure nature (*thog ma'i ka dag gi rang bzhin*) of the ground as their source. Here, *Klong chen rab 'byams* proceeds to explain how the Four Lamps are present during three phases:

1. At the time of the primordially pure ground (*gzhi ka dag gi dus la*), the Four Lamps are presenting themselves as subtle inner clarity (*nang gsal phra ba*) which means that they are only potentially available. This phase refers to the Clear Light of the Intermediate State of Dying (*'chi kha'i bar do*) and is dealt with in the practice of Cutting Through (*khregs chod*).
2. At the time of the appearance of the ground (*gzhi snang*) which corresponds to the Intermediate State of

Reality Itself (*chos nyid bar do*), the five-coloured light-rays arising in Space are the effect brought about by the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space (*dbyings rnam par dag pa'i sgron ma*). At the same time, the Buddha-Bodies dwelling in the light-drops manifest on account of the Lamp of Empty Drops of Light (*thig le stong pa'i sgron ma*), and as effect of the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space (*dbyings rnam par dag pa'i sgron ma*) there is the self-clarity arising in the form of networks (*sbrel thag*) of light-rays. The manifestation of the Lamp of Self-Arisen Discriminative Awareness (*shes rab rang byung gi sgron ma*) as knowledge, finally, marks the border-line between liberation and delusion.

3. At the time of having a physical body, i.e., during the Intermediate State of Being Born and Living (*skye gnas bar do*), the light-drops dwell in the palace of the heart which is surrounded by five-coloured light. Provided that at this time one is applying the methods of Leaping Over, the self-radiation (*rang gdangs*) takes its course through the four light-channels into Outer Space where it is seen as countless formations of light.

8. Mode of its appearance as object (*yul la ji ltar snang ba*):

In the emptiness of the pure Outer Space, the very essence of appearances, i.e. the clarity, is presencing itself in the form of the Great Self-Arisen Drop (*rang byung thig le chen po*)¹³⁰.

9. Signs (*tshad*)

As sign of its full experience is taken the continual appearance of the Inseparability of Space and Intelligence (*dbyings rig dbyer med*) which is said to be identical with the liberation from samsara.

10. Reality (*dngos*):

The reality of the light-drops of this lamp is different for each of the Six Realms:

1. It appears in the realm of the gods (*lha*) with a size of a finger-span (*mtho gang*). Among the five colours, white is dominant.
2. In the realm of the anti-gods it measures a full hand and has green as main colour.
3. As to the human beings, it has the size of a finger with a prevalence of red.
4. Even though it does not appear to the animals, it dwells inside their bodies in the form of a shimmer having dark blue as principal colour.
5. The same holds good for the hungry ghosts: It does not appear in the Outer Space, but is inside their bodies as mainly yellow shimmer.
6. On account of the great extent of unwholesome actions of hell beings, it is present in their bodies as extremely subtle five-coloured shimmer.

11. Quintessential instructions (*thabs kyi man ngag*):

Two kinds of instructions (*thabs*) are explained here:

1. In the case of the effortless (*rtsol med*) instruction which has to be executed in a dark room, one gently presses the eyes with thumb and finger by means of which light and light-drops are appearing. Afterwards, one has to loosen the pressure on the eyes and then one looks at the light until it disappears. When one is familiar with this instruction, the night appears as Clear Light and, on account of the light pervading the darkness, samsara is liberated into nirvana.
2. The instruction with effort (*rtsol bcas*) is applied if the effortless method does not work. Here, one first presses the neck-veins and then again the eyes in order to make visible the appearances of the Clear Light.

12. Analogy (*mthun dpe*):

It is compared with the eye in a peacock's feather and with the eye of a fish or a cat.

- *Summary of the fourth chapter of the Tantra*

Sgron ma 'bar ba:

The fourth chapter treats in detail the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space (*dbyings rnam par dag pa'i sgron ma*). In the *TCZ*, however, this lamp is dealt with in the third section of the chapter about the Four Lamps.

1. Essence (*ngo bo*):

This lamp presents itself first as dark blue and then as five-coloured enclosure projected into Outer Space. Inside it appears Intelligence (*rig pa*) in the form of *Vajra-Chains* (*rdo rje lu gu rgyud*). In this way, the self-clarity arises outwardly without losing its essence which is free of any artificiality (*ngo bo nyid ma bcos*).

2. Definition (*nges pa'i tshig*):

The syllable *dbyings* - “Space” - represents the place belonging to *rig*, i.e., the place where “Intelligence” arises.

The fact that its appearances in the Outer Space are free of any stains is termed *rnam par dag pa* - “utterly pure”.

It is called *sgron ma* - “lamp” - because it makes clear the union of appearance and Intelligence by holding the *Vajra-Chains* in its enclosure.

3. Classifications (*dbye ba*):

Three aspects relating to the ground, way, and result are classified here:

1. The Lamp of Utterly Pure Space Dwelling In the Ground (*gzhi la gnas pa'i dbyings rnam dag gi sgron ma*) is the Pristine Cognition and its light-body (*'od kyi sku*) which resides in the heart (*tsitta*) in inner clarity (*nang gsal*).
2. The Lamp of Utterly Pure Space Arising During the Way (*lam la snang ba'i dbyings rnam dag gi sgron ma*) refers to the Outer Space which is surrounded by five-coloured light and which shelters the lustre of light-drops in its centre.
3. The imprisonment of *Vajra-Chains* (*rdo rje lu gu rgyud*), i.e., the perfect fixation of them in the Space of this lamp, is the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space Appearing In the Outer Space As Result (*'bras bu yul la snang ba'i dbyings rnam dag gi sgron ma*).

In this context, *Klong chen rab 'byams* points out that the term “*Vajra-Chains*” denotes not only these illuminating chains, but also any other kind of appearance of light such as patterns of brocade (*za 'og ris*) or different kinds of lattice-work (*drwa ba dang drwa phyed*).

It is not difficult to recognize that these three aspects correspond somewhat to the three fundamental constituents of the ground, i.e., essence (*ngo bo*), nature (*rang bzhin*), and compassion (*thugs rje*). However, it is only the first one which relates to the inner clarity of the ground, the two other ones

referring to the appearance of the ground (*gzhi snang*) in Outer Space (*phyi'i dbyings*). Nevertheless, its appearance is a self-appearance (*rang snang*), which means, that the ground is even in this phase not undergoing any change as far as its fundamental being is concerned.

4. Nature (*rang bzhin*):

Its nature is circumscribed by using the two key terms “primordial purity” (*ka dag*) and “spontaneous perfection” (*lhun grub*):

1. The meditative absorption into the great natural pacification (*rang dal chen po*) of conceptuality, the profound understanding of the completely equalizing transparency, is automatically effected at the time of the imprisonment of Intelligence in the Outer Space of this lamp, because its essence is even in this phase of externalization present in primordial purity (*ka dag tu gnas pas*).
2. The many appearances of light have as their source the pristine radiation of spontaneous perfection (*lhun grub ye gdangs*) which already is present in the ground before its outward radiation. These appearances are the vivid expression of the non-duality in one's understanding of primordial purity (*ka dag*) and spontaneous perfection (*lhun grub*).

Obviously, the first aspect of its nature emphasizes rather the knowing agency, whereas the second one highlights the numerous forms of light perceived by it. However, it should be clear that such classifications are of provisional nature and provide us with a rather unsatisfying instrument to make comprehensible what cannot be fully understood by language and the thinking associated with it. That is why *Klong chen rab 'byams* is not tired of affirming the non-duality of primordial purity and spontaneous perfection.

5. Characteristics (*mtshan nyid*):

Similar to the explanation of its nature, the Inseparable Union of Intelligence and Space pervaded by light is looked at as the main characteristic of this lamp. Here, it is emphasized that the complete transparency (*zang ma*) of Outer Space and Intelligence is present forever. This means, that there is no ultimate distinction between what is inside and what is projected outwards.

6. Habituation (*goms pa*):

In order to realize the meaning of the lamps one has to become habituated to the different meditations of the Instruction-Class (*man ngag sde*). After having done the practice called "Separation of Samsara and Nirvana" ('*khor 'das ru shan*)¹³¹ one has to leave body and speech in their natural condition (*rnal du dbab pa*). On account of that, the Four Visions (*snang ba bzhi*) are about to arise in Outer Space (*phyi'i dbyings*).

7. Signs (*tshad*):

1. An initial sign of successful experience is the expansion of the five-coloured light in the Space which is four finger's breadth in front of one's eyes. In other words, departing from the spot between the eyes, this light begins to dissociate itself from the body of the yogin and starts to appear in the Space in front and above.
2. The signs of further experience are the Four Visions (*snang ba bzhi*) - a fourfold process of initially increasing and finally dissolving visions.
3. The attainment of power over birth (*skye ba la dbang thob pa*) and the power over entrance (*'jug pa la dbang thob pa*) are considered to be the final signs indicating that the Great Transference (*'pho ba chen po*) has been realized¹³².

8. Place (*gnas*):

The Space of the ground is the heart (*gzhi'i dbyings tsitta*).
The Space of the way is the network of light-channels (*lam gyi dbyings 'pri gu ta*), and the Space of the result is the cloudless Outer Space which serves as Space for the projection of the self-arising ground (*'bras bu rang shar gyi dbyings*).

9. Door (*sgo*):

The door for the outer arising of the Inner Space are the eyes.

10. Reality (*dngos*):

Its reality is the boundless light of the all-pervading blue Space and the Intelligence residing in it in the form of *Vajra-Chains* and light-drops.

In the following, *Klong chen rab 'byams* emphasizes that this lamp and the appearances of light initiated by it are empty of any substance and therefore out of the reach of apprehension by conditioned mind (*sems*). Nevertheless, the reality of this lamp is not to be conceived of as non-existent, because it makes itself clearly visible, thus resembling a rainbow appearing in the sky. Because the reality of this lamp cannot be destroyed by the action of gross Elementary Forces, it is not something which is conditioned and is therefore out of the reach of samsara. Its realization is called “repeated enlightenment (*yang sangs rgya ba*) in the forever available enlightenment” (*ye sangs*).

11. Analogy (*mthun dpe*):

Similar to the Tibetan sign *na ro* which resembles a pair of wings, there are two aspects of this lamp which constitute together the One Taste (*ro gcig*) of this lamp, namely the deep-blue Outer Space and the appearances arising in it.

- *Texts of the TTT 54 treating the term “lamp”*
(*sgron ma*):

After this detailed explanation of the numerous aspects of the standard set of the Four Lamps (*sgron ma bzhi*), one might wonder which principal Tantras (*rgyud*) and treasure texts (*gter ma*) mention this fourfold set of lamps. As a matter of fact, this set is not at all referred to in the texts of the *TTT 54*¹³³. However, the term *sgron ma* - “lamp” - is often used in the *TTT 54* to denote the teacher, i.e., the enlightened mind (*byang chub sems*). In this sense it is used for instance in certain passages of the *Chos thams cad rdzogs pa chen po byang chub kyi sems kun byed rgyal po*, one of the principal Tantras of the Mind Series (*sems sde*)¹³⁴.

Similarly, the *Rdzogs pa chen po ye shes gsang ba'i rgyud* , again a text of the Space Series (*klong sde*), contains the statement that Pristine Cognition is like a lamp which banishes the darkness of ignorance¹³⁵.

One finds the same statement in many other texts of the *TTT 54*, as for instance in the *Chos thams cad rdzogs pa chen po nam mkha'i mtha' dang myam pa'i rgyud chen po* which, too, belongs to the Mind Series¹³⁶.

In the *sems sde* text *Byang chub kyi sems rdzogs pa chen po kun 'dus gser gyi nya mo 'khor lo bskor ba'i rgyud chen po* the Lamp of Intelligence (*rig pa'i sgron ma*) is understood as a means which lights up itself as self-arisen result and as such is compared to a jewel one is holding in the hand¹³⁷.

In a passage of the *Rdzogs pa chen po ye shes 'khor lo gsang ba thugs kyi rgyud* which forms part of the Instruction Series (*man ngag sde*) one reads that even though the Form-Body (*gzugs sku*) which is like a “water-crystal” (*chu shel*) or like a lamp, is dwelling in one’s body, it is temporarily lacking the capability of manifesting on account of the formation of the physical body. This situation then is compared to the one of the bird called *Khyung* which is capable of flying immediately after having left its egg, but which possesses this power only potentially as long it stays in its egg¹³⁸.

According to the *sems sde* text *Byang chub kyi sems rin chen 'khor lo*, it is due to the Lamp of Intelligence Which Is Mind Itself (*sems nyid rig pa'i sgron ma*) that the essence of all precious quintessential instructions is revealed. Thus, without needing any oral transmission, the sun of self-arisen clarity lights up in the sky-like nature of all that is (*chos nyid nam mkha' lta bu*)¹³⁹.

The *Seng ge sgra dgongs pa nyi zla kha sbyor rgyud* probably belongs to the Instruction Series (*man ngag sde*) and seems to be the only text of the *TTT* 54 which mentions the expression “Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a Distance” (*rgyang zhag chu yi sgon ma*). Here, this lamp is likened to a mirror which stands for the ground on which everything is appearing. In particular, this lamp is connected with the Three Budda-Bodies. Thus, the purity of their appearances is represented by the *nirmaṇakāya* (*sprul sku*), their continuity by the *sambhogakāya* (*longs sku*), and their freedom from conceptuality by the *dharmakāya* (*chos sku*)¹⁴⁰.

Another *man ngag sde* text of the *TTT* 54, the *Sangs rgyas thams cad kyi dgongs pa ma slad ji bzhin ma'i don ye shes kyi mar me chen po'i rgyud*, contains a passage which presents an uncommon fourfold set of lamps consisting of one principal lamp and three subsidiary lamps. Unfortunately, one finds there only a rather concise explanation of it. What seems to be clear, however, is the statement that the sun-like Lamp of Unchanging Intelligence (*'gyur med rig pa'i sgron ma*) arises, together with three lamps as its light-rays, out of the ground (*gzhi*). These three lamps are named "Lamp of Mind Which Is Intelligence" (*rig pa sems gyi sgron ma*), "Lamp of Discriminative Awareness of the Three Lineages" (*brgyud pa gsum pa shes rab sgron ma*), and "Lamp of Space and Light-Rays" (*nam mkha' gser gyi sgron ma*)¹⁴¹.

Moreover, in the *Seng ge sgra dgongs pa nyi zla kha sbyor rgyud* one finds a passage which quite clearly explains the appearance of the ground (*gzhi snang*) in Outer Space which, of course, is the basic concept of the practice of Leaping Over (*thod rgal*). It is stated here that the five aspects of consciousness (*rnam shes lnga*) dissolve into five-coloured light (*'od lnga*), that this light arises in the form of the Five Buddha-Families (*rigs lnga*) and that it finally rejoins the *dharmakāya*. It is known as the Body of Pristine Cognition (*ye shes sku*) and dwells forever in the Lamp of the Heart (*tsitta sgron ma*) as a five-coloured thread-ball (*mtshon gyi gru gu*). Understanding its arisal in the sky of Reality Itself, one is liberated into the *sambhogakāya*¹⁴².

- *Texts of the TTT 55 treating the term “lamp”*
(*sgron ma*):

Now, as we have seen how the term *sgron ma* is used in the texts of the *TTT* 54, we shall examine how the situation presents itself in the texts of the *TTT* 55¹⁴³. On the whole, the texts of the *TTT* 55 treat the term *sgron ma* in a similar way, but unlike the texts of the *TTT* 54, they do contain several passages dealing with the standard set of the Four Lamps (*sgron ma bzhi*)¹⁴⁴.

A particular case is the *gter ma* text *Rgyud thams cad kyi rgyal po nyi zla'i snying po 'od 'bar ba bdud rtsi rgya mtsho 'khyil ba'i rgyud* which belongs to the Instruction Series (*man ngag sde*) and which presents an uncommon set of Four Lamps. Their names are mentioned, but a detailed explanation of them is not given. The central statement of the relevant passage, however, is that the so called “gold of the core of meaning” (*snying po don gyi gser*) which is covered by ignorance can only be found with the help of the Four Lamps which are termed here “Lamp of Self-Clear Mind” (*rang gsal sems kyi sgron ma*), “Lamp of Realization Which Is Pristine Cognition” (*rtog pa ye shes sgron ma*), “Lamp of Self-Arisen Innate Radiation” (*rang byung ngang dangs sgron ma*), and “Lamp of the Core Which Is Reality Itself” (*snying po chos nyid sgron ma*). Despite its insubstantiality (*dngos med*), the nature of the core of meaning (*snying po'i rang bzhin*) nevertheless can manifest itself as anything by using the medium of the Four Lamps. Of decisive importance is here that

the various appearances of the lamps dissolve in the very moment of their arising into the nameless dark-blue of sky, called “Space of Reality” (*chos dbyings*) where perfect Buddhahood (*mngon sangs rgyas*) finally is attained¹⁴⁵.

The standard set of Four Lamps¹⁴⁶ is explained in some detail in the *gter ma* text *Chos thams cad kyi don bstan pa* which is also named *Rgyud chen dri med zla shel*¹⁴⁷. However, what is explained here is not different from what can be found in other similar texts of the Instruction Series (*man ngag sde*).

The other text containing rather extensive information about the standard set of the Four Lamps is the *Theg pa kun gyi spyi phud klong chen rab 'byams kyi rgyud*, a *gter ma* text which also seems to belong to the Instruction Series¹⁴⁸. In the fifth chapter of this Tantra, three of these four lamps are explained in detail, but a detailed presentation of the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space (*dbyings rnam par dag pa'i sgron ma*) is neither in this chapter nor in other chapters available¹⁴⁹.

Similar to the exposition of the standard set of the Four Lamps as given in the *Sgron ma 'bar ba'i rgyud* or in the *TCZ*, here too, each of them is analysed into its aspects. Concerning the number of the various aspects, it is noteworthy that one discovers only slight differences when one is comparing the relevant passages with those of the *Sgron ma 'bar ba'i rgyud* or the *TCZ*¹⁵⁰.

As far as I know, the *Theg pa kun gyi spyi phud klong chen rab 'byams kyi rgyud* and the *Chos thams cad kyi don bstan pa* are the only two texts - both of them are *gter ma* texts - to be found in the *TTT* 55 which treat the standard set of the Four

Lamps. This is not surprising, because it is well known that this subject is mainly presented in the texts of the Instruction Series (*man ngag sde*) to which these two texts belong, and this series is primarily contained in the *TTT* 56.

- *Texts of the TTT 56 treating the term “lamp”*
(*sgron ma*):

Consequently, one should be able to locate relevant texts in the *TTT* 56 which incorporates many *man ngag sde* texts. However, this is not the case. The only detailed exposition of the standard set of the Four Lamps is the one to be found in the *Gser gyi me tog mdzes pa rin po che'i sgron ma 'bar ba'i rgyud*.

Thus, in the *man ngag sde* text *Mu tig phreng ba rin po che gsang ba'i rgyud*, their names are mentioned without giving any further information about them¹⁵¹.

Another passage speaking of the standard set of the Four Lamps and elucidating them with a few words can be found in the *man ngag sde* text *Nyi zla kha sbyor gsang ba'i rgyud chen po*¹⁵².

Surprisingly, in the *Kun tu bzang po klong drug pa'i rgyud gsang ba chen po* one has no presentation of them, there being only a small commentary on the Lamp of Empty Drops of Light (*thig le stong pa'i sgron ma*)¹⁵³.

The *man ngag sde* text *Sgra thal 'gyur* is a particular case as far as the standard set of the Four Lamps are concerned, because here one finds at least a quite extensive analysis of their actions (*las*), piths (*gnad*), characteristics (*mthsan nyid*), places (*yul*), and supports (*rten*)¹⁵⁴.

A further exception is the *man ngag sde* text *Rig pa rang shar chen po'i rgyud*¹⁵⁵ which, too, presents at least a short exposition of the standard set of the Four Lamps. However, it should be noted that the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space (*dbyings rnam par dag pa'i sgron ma*) is replaced here by the Lamp of Space and Intelligence (*rig pa dbyings kyi sgron ma*) a term which, of course, emphasizes the Inseparable Union of Space and Intelligence (*dbyings rig byer med*). Except for that, there are no significant differences as far as the Four Lamps are concerned.

Last but not least, it's worth mentioning that there are no texts in the *TTT* 56 which treat sets of three, five, six or nine lamps. However, sets consisting of two lamps - see below - are frequently met with. Again, as far as the standard set of Four Lamps is concerned: An examination of the *TTT* 56 clearly shows that this set is rarely found there, which confirms the assumption that it is mainly dealt with in the *Snying thig* texts¹⁵⁶.

- *Texts of the Syning thig treating the term “lamp”*
(*sgron ma*):

These treasure texts (*gter ma*), too, form part of the Instruction Series (*man ngag sde*) and are the most important source containing information about the standard set of Four Lamps and other sets of Lamps. Thus, in the *ZMYT*⁵⁷ one finds besides the usual general descriptions of this set a short but very important elucidation of their essences.

The Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a Distance (*rgyang zhag chu'i sgron ma*) is said to have a threefold essence (*gnad*) consisting of the Three Ways of Looking (*gzigs stangs gsum*)⁵⁸ as applied in the practice of Leaping Over. It is emphasized here that these ways of looking should not be forced, because only an involuntary relaxation which implies the Self-Liberation (*rang grol*) of karmic propensities (*bag chags*) manifesting in and as samsaric appearances, brings about the arising and continual augmentation of the Four Visions (*snang ba bzhi*).

As far as the essence of the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space (*dbyings rnam par dag pa'i sgron ma*) is concerned, the point is stressed that a calmness free from distraction enhances the vision of Intelligence in Outer Space (*phyi'i dbyings*).

To gently press the eyes with thumb and finger and to focus Intelligence on the light-drops represents the essence of the Lamp of Empty Drops of Light (*thig le stong pa'i sgron ma*).

Similar to the preceding lamps, an involuntary composure is considered as essence of the Lamp of Self- Arisen

Discriminative Awareness (*shes rab rang byung gi sgron ma*), but the object of this lamp is rather the *Vajra-Chains* whereas the Lamp of Empty Drops of Light is intimately related to the light-drops, and the sphere of activity of the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space is said to be the Outer Space. As is stated below in the same text, the different essences can be condensed into a single one, namely the completely relaxed absorption in Space and Intelligence (*dbyings rig*), by means of which Pristine Cognition is accomplished without effort.

In the *KDYT*¹⁵⁹, one finds an interesting passage describing the activity (*byed las*) of the Four Lamps. Thus, the Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a Distance serves as support for the arising of Pristine Cognition. Moreover, the wind of Pristine Cognition (*ye shes kyi rlung*) proceeds from this lamp into Outer Space.

The Lamp of Utterly Pure Space presents itself as Outer Space (*phyi'i dbyings*), i.e., as Space of projection for the arising of the other lamps. In the outwardly projected Inner Space (*nang dbyings*) of this lamp arises a five coloured lustre (*dwangs ma*) and Buddha-Bodies without interruption. Moreover, it brings about the complete maturation of the Three Piths (*gnad gsum*)¹⁶⁰ and empties delusory appearances (*'khrul snang*).

The Lamp of Empty Drops of Light effects the augmentation of Pristine Cognition by providing the location for the activity of the wind (*rlung*) which expresses itself inside this lamp in the form of numerous appearances of light. *Klong chen rab 'byams* emphasizes here the point that he is not referring to the karmic

wind (*las rlung*), because non-karmic appearances like light-drops exclusively are brought about by the wind of Pristine Cognition (*ye shes kyi rlung*).

The Lamp of Self-Arisen Discriminative Awareness is conscious of whatever arises in such a way that it retains its natural non-duality. Thereby, the spontaneously perfect Pristine Cognition (*lhun grub kyi ye shes*) is revealed in its very immediacy. Furthermore, what dwells forever in this lamp is the Non-Conceptual Buddha-Body (*rtog med kyi sku*) which discloses the Pristine Cognition of the primordially pure Reality Itself (*chos nyid ka dag gi ye shes*).

Obviously, Pristine Cognition as such understands that whatever is, ultimately is unconditioned (*chos thams cad 'dus ma byas pa*) and therefore without any self (*bdag med*)¹⁶¹.

As usual, however, the assumption is denied that an understanding of exclusive emptiness is implied, because it is also termed “naturally clear” (*rang bzhin gyis 'od gsal ba*). Therefore, it comes not as a surprise that Pristine Cognition is accounted for as the great source of whatever is manifesting as Pristine Cognition or Buddha-Bodies. Thus, this source is primordially pure (*ka dag*), because it is empty of any conceptuality and at the same time spontaneously perfect (*lhun grub*), because it is endowed with clarity.

In the *KDYT*¹⁶² there is also a passage stating that the non-duality of primordial purity and spontaneous perfection is the principal characteristic of the Lamp of Self-Arisen Discriminative Awareness, and the central role of ripening the ground into the result is also assigned to this lamp.

Here, "ripening" is defined as "ripening of Discriminative Awareness into Buddha-Bodies" (*shes rab sku ru smin pa*) which arise during the Four Visions (*snang ba bzhi*) of the Leaping Over, and the result is qualified as "liberated forever" (*ye grol*) which points at its intimate relation to the ground.

Moreover, the *KDYT*⁶³ contains further information about the relation of the standard set of the Four Lamps to the ground, the way and the result. Thus, after the arising of the visions of the Leaping Over on account of gazing into a mirror, the teacher begins with the real pointing out or introduction of the ground which consists of presenting symbols of three of the Four Lamps, leaving out the Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a Distance: The aggregation of light-rays (*'od zer gyi phung po*) appearing in the mirror is said to represent the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space. Inside this aggregation dwell light-drops which, of course, exemplify the Lamp of Empty Drops of Light, and, even though not explicitly stated, the arising of *Vajra*-Chains in between these various appearances of light symbolizes the Lamp of Self-Arisen Discriminative Awareness.

As for the relation of the standard set of the Four Lamps to the way (*lam*) and the result (*'bras bu*): These two phases will be treated in the Eighth and Eleventh Theme, respectively.

- *Texts treating sets of Two, Three, Five, Six or Nine*

Lamps:

Needless to say, it certainly is beyond the scope of this work to give an exhaustive explanation of all that has been written about the standard set of the Four Lamps in the collection Four Branches of the Heart Essence (*Snying thig ya bzhi*).

However, when one is looking for sets of Two, Five or Six lamps, one soon realizes that there is not much information about them in this collection and sets of Three or Nine Lamps cannot be found there. As far as the *TTT* 54-56 is concerned: Different sets of lamps can only be located in texts belonging to the Instruction Series (*man ngag sde*). Undoubtedly, it will be slowly growing research on the huge corpus of the treasure texts (*gter ma*) of the *Rin chen gter mdzod* that will shed some further light on the different sets of lamps.

A set of Two Lamps (*sgron ma gnyis*) is presented in the *Rig pa rang shar chen po'i rgyud*¹⁶⁴, but very little is said about it. Thus, one is merely told that the Lamp of Empty Drops of Light cannot be realized by efforts made by mind (*sems*) and the Lamp of Space and Intelligence (*rig pa dbyings kyi sgron ma*), too, is considered to be beyond mind, because its sphere of action is the Space of Pristine Cognition. It represents Intelligence which penetrates the eyes by means of which it then perceives the appearances of Pristine Cognition in its completely pure Outer Space¹⁶⁵.

This set of Two Lamps (*sgron ma gnyis*) can also be found in the *man ngag sde* text *Seng ge rtsal rdzogs chen po*.

Interestingly, these two lamps are considered here to be the two inseparable aspects of the Lamp of Pristine Cognition of

Intelligence (*rig pa'i ye shes sgron ma*). Thus, their place is the eye, their time is the Intermediate State of Reality Itself (*chos nyid kyi bar do*), and their realization is Intelligence which is fully arisen in Outer Space. Moreover, there is an analysis of what is meant with the term “Space and Intelligence” (*dbyings rig*)¹⁶⁶ during the three times of the ground, the way, and the result¹⁶⁷.

In another passage of the same text¹⁶⁸, one finds a still different set of Two Lamps (*sgron ma gnyis*). It consists of:

1. The Lamp of Empty Drops of Light (*thig le stong pa'i sgron ma*), and
2. the Lamp of Self-Arisen Space (*rang byung dbyings kyi sgron ma*).

Obviously, the latter replaces here the Lamp of Space and Intelligence (*rig pa dbyings kyi sgron ma*) mentioned above. By the way, this set of Two Lamps can also be found in the *man ngag sde* text *Nor bu 'phra bkod chen po'i rgyud*¹⁶⁹.

As far as I know, except for the *Seng ge rtsal rdzogs chen po*, there are no other texts of the *TTT* 56 treating the Lamp of Pristine Cognition of Intelligence (*rig pa'i ye shes sgron ma*). Further research will have to show how far the latter is identical with the Lamp of Pristine Cognition (*ye shes sgron ma*) as witnessed in the *man ngag sde* texts *Kun tu bzang po thugs kyi me long gi rgyud* and *Rdo rje sems dpa' snying gi me long*¹⁷⁰.

Examining the texts of the *TTT* 56, it is noticeable that very often the Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a Distance (*rgyang zhag chu yi sgon ma* or *chu'i sgron ma*) is

spoken of, the three other lamps, however, are not even mentioned¹⁷¹.

As already mentioned above, I could not even find a single text in the *TTT* 56 dealing with sets of Three, Five, Six or Nine Lamps.

The *mang ngag sde* text *Sangs rgyas thams cad kyi dgongs pa ma slad ji bzhin ma'i don ye shes kyi mar me chen po'i rgyud* of the *TTT* 54 presents besides an uncommon fourfold set of lamps - see above - a set of Three Lamps, i.e., the Lamp of the Drop of Pristine Cognition (*thig le ye shes sgron ma*), the Lamp of the Water (*chu'i sgron ma*), and the Lamp of the Radiation of the Ocean (*rgya mtsho gdangs kyi sgron ma*). Sets of Two, Four, Five, Six or Nine Lamps, however, cannot be found in the *TTT* 54.

In the *TTT* 55 I could not locate sets of Two, Three, Six or Nine Lamps, but this volume contains the standard set of Four Lamps as well as an uncommon fourfold set of lamps. Moreover, one finds in the *Bskal pa dum bu'i rgyud* a passage mentioning the term “Five Lamps”, but no further information about it is given there¹⁷². The only source at my disposal which contains information about Five Lamps is the *BMYT*¹⁵².

1. The *Tsitta* Lamp of Flesh (*tsitta sha'i sgron ma*) is the heart.
2. The Lamp of the Ground In Its Natural State (*gnas lugs gzhi'i sgron ma*) is the Intelligence dwelling in the heart..

3. The Lamp of the Channel Which is White and Smooth (*dkar 'jam rtsa'i sgron ma*) is the channel connecting the heart with the eyes.
4. The Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a Distance (*rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma*) is the eye which sees the visions of the Clear Light.
5. The Lamp of Pristine Cognition of the Clear Light (*'od gsal ye shes kyi sgron ma*) refers to a continual absorption (*ting nge 'dzin*) in the Clear Light.

In order to know more about the first four lamps - I could not locate an explanation of the fifth one - one has to consult the set of Six Lamps (*sgron ma drug*) to be found in the ZMY¹⁷⁴.

1. First, there is an explanation of the Lamp of the Abiding Ground (*gnas pa gzhi'i sgron ma*) which corresponds to the Lamp of the Ground In Its Natural State (*gnas lugs gzhi'i sgron ma*) as presented in the BMY. It is defined as the spontaneously perfect Buddhahood of the ground which pervades samsara and nirvana in the same way as milk pervades butter. Different *sūtric* and tantric texts are quoted in order to confirm the identity of this lamp with the *tathāgatagarbha* (*de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po*).
2. When the Lamp of the Abiding Ground denotes the potential of the ground to manifest itself as anything, the *Tsitta* Lamp of Flesh (*tsitta sha'i sgron ma*) rather points at the place where it is centred. Similar to a butterlamp inside a vase, it dwells in the innermost

- middle of the heart as self-light (*rang 'od*) of Pristine Cognition and Buddha-Bodies.
3. The Lamp of the Channel Which is White and Smooth (*dkar 'jam rtsa'i sgron ma*) refers to the channel which is like white silken thread. It connects the heart with the eyes and shelters the self-radiation of Pristine Cognition.
 4. The eyes are the Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a Distance (*rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma*). Because this lamp has the capacity to illuminate anything, it is compared to sun and moon.
 5. The Lamp of the Time of the Intermediate State (*bar do dus kyi sgron ma*) is the Intermediate State of Reality Itself (*chos nyid kyi bar do*). To be precise, it denotes the time of the recognition that it is the ground itself which appears as Pristine Cognition and Buddha-Bodies. This recognition is like meeting an old friend again, because it is said to be immediate and involuntary.
 6. The Lamp of the Ultimate Result (*mthar thug 'bras bu'i sgron ma*), at last, refers to Intelligence taking again its seat in the ground after the dissolution of the appearances of the ground (*gzhi snang*). This seat is named “ Secret Sphere of Spontaneously Perfect Preciousness” (*lhun grub rin po che gsang ba'i sbubs*)¹⁷⁵ and is, on account of its ultimate and unchanging being, compared to the crop one has harvested in autumn.

Another passage dealing with the same set of Six Lamps (*sgron ma drug*) is contained in the *BMYT*¹⁷⁶. It is stated here

that they are associated with the Six Intermediate States (*bar do drug*)¹⁷⁷, but unfortunately one is not told how these two sets are related to each other. Probably, this statement is here just intended to stress the point that whatever arises in the Six Intermediate States is directly related to the Six Lamps.

Now, as to the set of Nine Lamps (*sgron ma dgu*):

1. The *Tsitta* Lamp of Flesh (*tsitta sha'i sgron ma*),
2. the Lamp of the Channel Which Is White and Smooth (*dkar 'jam rtsa'i sgron ma*),
3. the Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a Distance (*rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma*),
4. the Lamp of Empty Drops of Light (*thig le stong pa'i sgron ma*),
5. the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space (*dbyings rnam par dag pa'i sgron ma*),
6. the Lamp of Self-Arisen Discriminative Awareness (*shes rab rang byung gi sgron ma*),
7. the Lamp of the Abiding Ground (*gnas pa gzhi'i sgron ma*),
8. the Lamp of the Time of the Intermediate State (*bar do dus kyi sgron ma*), and
9. the Lamp of the Ultimate Result (*mthar thug 'bras bu'i sgron ma*).

As mentioned above, this set is not available in the collection Four Branches of the Heart Essence (*Snying thig ya bzhi*) and the same is the case as far the *TTT* 54-56 are concerned.

The only source at my disposal dealing with them is the *NYSNY*, a relatively late text¹⁷⁸:

Here, these Nine Lamps¹⁷⁹ are classified into an inner, an outer, and an unnamed threefold set. However, there are some problems involved with this kind of classification.

Certainly, it is comprehensible that the *Tsitta* Lamp of Flesh (*tsitta sha'i sgron ma*), the Lamp of the Channel Which Is White and Smooth (*dkar 'jam rtsa'i sgron ma*), and the Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a Distance (*rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma*) are conceived of as “Three Inner Lamps” (*nang gi sgron ma gsum*), because they have in common that they dwell inside the body.

The reason why the Lamp of Empty Drops of Light (*thig le stong pa'i sgron ma*), the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space (*dbyings nam par dag pa'i sgron ma*), and the Lamp of Self-Arisen Discriminative Awareness (*shes rab rang byung gi sgron ma*) are called “Three Outer Lamps” (*phyi'i sgron ma gsum*) is, however, less obvious, but maybe it reflects the fact that all of them arise in Outer Space. As is well known, even entities conceived of as inner entities such as mental processes are perceived in the context of the Leaping Over (*thod rgal*) as something which appears outside. Thus, this kind of externalization does not even stop at the Lamp of Self-Arisen Discriminative Awareness (*shes rab rang byung gi sgron ma*) which makes itself felt outwardly in the form of *Vajra-Chains*.

Very little is said here concerning the last unnamed threefold set which consists of the Lamp of the Abiding Ground (*gnas pa gzhi'i sgron ma*), the Lamp of the Time of the Intermediate

State (*bar do dus kyi sgron ma*), and the Lamp of the Ultimate Result (*mthar thug 'bras bu'i sgron ma*). However, it seems to be quite clear that they are associated with the ground, the way, and the result (*gzhi lam 'bras gsum*). In other words, they refer to the three phases of the unfolding of the tree inner and three outer lamps described above.

After this rather lengthy explanation of the lamps which, however, on account of the sheer mass of texts on this subject inevitably remains patchy work, another important expression, namely the inseparable union of Space and Intelligence (*dbyings rig dbyer med*) is the next subject, to be dealt with in the Seventh Theme.

The Seventh Theme

The place where Pristine Cognition appears

“It appears in the cloudless empty sky, which is the sphere of Outer Space.

Furthermore, it is the ground as empty sphere in which empty Intelligence arises.

Likewise, in the Condensed Perfection of Discriminative Awareness (*Sañcaya-gāthā-prajñā-pāramitā*) it is said:

Examine the skies (to know) the meaning!

And in the Tantra *Nam mkha' che* it is said:

The sky is empty and unborn (*skye med*).
(There in) the path of the birds which is the sky dwells the yoga.”

Such statements are pronounced in various *sūtras* and Tantras.

The Inner Space arises inside the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space (*dbyings rnam par dag pa'i sgron ma*).

Likewise, statements such as the following one can be found in various texts:

In the Space of all outer and inner things, which is the sphere of utterly pure action, there is no duality of Buddhas and sentient beings.

How can there be something to be fabricated by means of a way?

Furthermore, since whatever appears (*snang lugs*), appears as inseparability of Space and Intelligence (*dbyings rig 'du 'bral med pa*), one speaks of it as the “view without restrictions concerning its two aspects” (*don gnyis mu mtha' dang bral ba'i lta ba*), (being labeled) “inseparable union”, “inseparable clarity and emptiness” or “non-duality of mind and object”.

According to countless statements, both, the Body of Vajra-Chains (*rdo rje lu gu rgyud*)¹⁸⁰ appearing in multitude and the Lamp of Pure and Clear Space (*dbyings gsal dag pa'i sgron ma*) are said actually to appear (*mngon du snang ba*) by means of the eyes. However, since these (two aspects) are not an object of the activity of an analytical awareness (*shes rab kyi spyod yul*), their Reality Itself (*chos nyid*) arises out of higher perception (*mngon par shes pa*) and of what is directly perceived (*mngon sum pa*) (by it).”

By the way, the Lamp of Pure and Clear Space is more or less identical with the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space. Thus, as mentioned in the text, the fundamental dynamics initializing the various luminous forms arising during the Four

Visions (*snang ba bzhi*)¹⁸¹ is Intelligence lighting up itself in and as Space. The inseparability of these two aspects is clearly elucidated in the *TDZ*¹⁸² where their essence is established by means of a threefold presentation consisting of a general exposition of its essence, of a detailed analysis of its aspects, and of an explanation of the mode of its realization:

1. The general exposition of the essence of Space and Intelligence:

The essence (*ngo bo*) of Space is the five-coloured light-radiation (*'od gdangs*) evolving from the blue space, and the essence of Intelligence is the appearance of *Vajra*-Chains arising as outer radiation of Intelligence as such which resides in the heart (*tsitta*). In a quotation drawn from the Tantra *Mu tig phreng ba* it is stated that similar to a golden chain threaded by a skilled craftsman, the *Vajra*-Chain is eventuated by the all-knowing, non-conceptual and untainted Intelligence, and in the Tantra *Seng ge rtsal rdzogs*, the display of the naturally present Lamp of Pristine Cognition of Intelligence (*rig pa'i ye shes sgron ma*) as inseparability of the Lamp of Empty Drops of Light (*thig le stong pa'i sgron ma*) and of the Lamp of Space and Intelligence (*rig pa dbyings kyi sgron ma*) is emphasized¹⁸³.

The general exposition of its essence continues with determining the base (*rten*) as Intelligence which holds onto the ground and which dwells in the heart (*tsitta*). Based on it (*brten pa*) is Space in the form of a light-dome and as radiation, and the relationship between the base and the based is compared with a butter-lamp and its light. According to a

quotation from the Tantra *Nor bu 'phra bkod*, the base is the meaning of Great Perfection being present since ever in the self-perfect singularity (*thig le nyag gcig*)¹⁸⁴, and the based is the perfect secret meaning of the Space of Intelligence consisting of the Lamp of Empty Drops of Light (*thig le stong pa'i sgron ma*) and the Self-Arisen Lamp of Space (*rang byung dbyings kyi sgron ma*). This Space transcends the dichotomy of being empty or not being empty and is naturally present, because the appearances actually lighting up in and as this space are effortlessly perfect.

Klong chen rab 'byams then explains that Space is specifically characterised (*mtshan nyid*) by its capacity to place at the disposal of Intelligence its natural sphere which is the light-radiation (*'od gdangs*) consisting of the Five Ultimate Elementary Forces (*don dam gyi 'byung ba lnga*), and he goes on saying that the specific characteristic of Intelligence which dwells inside the fence of Space is its oscillation initiated by its wind. In order to support this statement, *Klong chen rab 'byams* cites the Tantra *Senge ge rtsal rdzogs*, where Intelligence is said to be marked by *Vajra-Chains* (*rdo rje lu gu rgyud*). These chains are subtle and oscillate in Space which is a vast expanse having a luminous five-coloured circumference projected out of Pristine Cognition and comprising qualities such as clarity, warmth, coolness, and mobility.

The place (*gnas*) of Space and Intelligence are the eyes, because they constitute the medium for their outward manifestation, and the time (*dus*) of their manifestation is for a practitioner the present life, and for common people it is the Intermediate State of Reality Itself (*chos nyid kyi bar do*).

Having discussed the base, the specific characteristic, the place, and the time of Space and Intelligence, *Klong chen rab 'byams* concludes the general exposition of its essence with the definition of its realization (*rtogs pa*) as realization of Reality Itself in and as vividly perceived appearance.

2. The detailed analysis of the aspects of Space and Intelligence:

The detailed analysis explains first the mode of their presence in the ground (*gzhi'i dbyings rig*). The ground as perfection of that which has to be done is the Intelligence of primordially pure appearance (*rig pa ka dag gi snang ba*), being empty and resembling the blue of the autumn sky¹⁸⁵, and that which makes it understood is the ground of method (*rtogs byed thabs kyi gzhi*) being the appearance of Inner Space which lights up in the heart of one's present body as light-radiation. According to a quotation drawn from the Tantra *Seng ge rtsal rdzogs*, this inner knowing radiation consists of Space as Lamp of Space (*dbyings kyi sgron ma*), and Intelligence as *Vajra-Chains*.

The path of Space and Intelligence relates to their appearance in immediate perception, made accessible as luminous circumference of Space and *Vajra-Chains* of Intelligence which are connected to light-drops harbouring the Five Buddha-Bodies of the *sambhogakāya*.

At the time of the result, Space pervades everywhere as five-coloured Buddha-Realms, and, on account of discriminative awareness being naturally present in Intelligence, the latter has ripened into Buddha-Bodies.

What is called “Pristine Cognition of the inseparable union of Space and Intelligence” refers to the inseparable union of Space as the five colours of Pristine Cognition and Intelligence as assemblages of Peaceful and Wrathful Buddha-Bodies (*zhi khro'i tshom bu*)¹⁸⁶. *Klong chen rab 'byams* mentions in this context that although the aspect of colourfulness of Space is termed “Appearances of Pristine Cognition” (*ye shes kyi snang ba*), it basically represents a variety of Space.

3. The explanation of the mode of the realization of Space and Intelligence:

The first part of the explanation of the mode of the realization of Space and Intelligence is an exhortation to realize what is meant by it after having pondered on the fault of not doing so. According to a quotation from the Tantra *Rin chen spung pa*, this lack of realization is characterised by one's dwelling in a kind of dull non-conceptuality and is illustrated by the picture of a woodcutter who cuts the tree merely in its middle part without uprooting it definitely.

As second part follows a quotation from the Tantra *Seng ge rtsal rdzogs* which confirms the basic assumption of *thod rgal* that everything arising as vision, meditation, and action, as well as Self-Appearance of Pristine Cognition (*ye shes kyi rang snang*), is contained in the inseparability of Space and Intelligence.

The necessity of practice which implies the application of the pith of Space and Intelligence to the material body and to the delusory thoughts of mind is emphasized in the third part.

Klong chen rab 'byams cites here the Tantra *Yi ge med pa*,

where it is stated that the amazing non-substantial appearances of *thod rgal* cannot arise in the outer sky on account of being obscured by the rough Five Elementary Forces. Thus, the essence of self-appearing Intelligence is obscured by afflictions, and the clear radiation (*gsal dangs*) naturally present in Reality Itself is not accessible in immediate perception on account of its obscuration by various (samsaric) activities. Moreover, the essence of Intelligence is difficult to grasp, but its play as luminous Pristine Cognition (*ye shes kyi rtsal*) in Outer Space is easily rendered accessible, and, even though the Space of Intelligence does not undergo any change, it is realized when the power of Intelligence has exhausted itself in the final phase of the Vision of Exhaustion of Reality Itself (*chos nyid zad pa'i snang ba*).

The concluding part of the quotation says that even though the nature of Intelligence is all-pervading, one has to rely on the instruction of the *dharmakāya* in order to let it manifest. What is actually manifesting in and as Space and Intelligence is the subject of the Eighth Theme.

The Eighth Theme

The practice

“(Here) it is shown (how) to accomplish a special receptacle fit to practise (Pristine Cognition):

First, according to the system of the Secret Mantra, it is necessary to bestow empowerments in order to ripen what is not ripened, and in order to confer empowerments a qualified teacher is required.

The teacher has a broad view and is proficient in the Tantras.

In general, he knows many Tantra classes of the Secret Mantra, and in particular, he (is able to) “pull out the dagger of the Tantras” (*rgyud kyi phur pa ‘don pa*).

He knows to demonstrate in (actual) application the words of the Tantras, is well acquainted with it and proficient in its practice (*sgrub pa*), i.e., he demonstrates the Four Aspects of Approach and Accomplishment (*bsnyen sgrub yan lag bzhi*)¹⁸⁷ in (actual) application, he is proficient and powerful in protecting from killing mantras provoked by evil invocation (*‘bod rbad*) and in reverting them.

He has reached understanding and is learned in the (different) views.

He has realized the outer view, being the topics of the Nine Graduated Vehicles (*theg pa rim pa dgu*), and

being expert in the inner view (*nang gi lta ba*), he perceives Reality Itself in actuality.

He is well versed in meditation and its practice (*nyams su len pa*).

Having given up wordly activities (*'jig rten gyi bya ba*) he arrives at practising, and having abandoned distraction, he comes to live in mountain caves and solitary places.

He himself is practising and he also makes others enter into practice.

Out of his meditative experience, the Uncommon (*thun mongs ma yin pa*) endowed with the compassionate enlightened mind has arisen.

On the other hand, the student has great faith, and having abandoned samsaric activities, he is not considering (*yid la byed*) what is alien to the (Buddhist) teaching.

Being generous, he offers all his wealth to his teacher.

Endowed with great discriminative awareness, he shows great respect (*mos pa*) for the Great Vehicle.

Out of great devotion he never separates from the teacher.

Disgusted with samsara, he is not involved in it.

Being diligent (*brtson 'grus*), he perseveres in practice (*brtson pa*).

On account of his intensive practice in previous lives (*sngon sbyangs*), he is a worthy vessel for the Great Perfection (*Rdzogs pa chen po*).

To be a worthy vessel of the Natural Great Perfection means that one's discursive thinking and karmic

propensities are extremely small, that one's behaviour is exceedingly unbiased (*yangs pa*), that one's dualistic fixation (*gzung 'dzin*) is almost imperceptible, that one's body and speech are at ease and relaxed, that one is not considering hardship as suffering, and in particular, that one is devoted to the Buddhist teaching and to the teacher. Such a worthy vessel of a student supplicates after three, seven or one year a qualified (*mtshan ldan*) teacher for empowerments by offering him a *maṇḍala* of gold or other (precious metals) and by saying the words "Please, empower me!"

When the teacher is (willing) to confer (them), the student has to arrange the things (to be offered to him).

Afterwards, the teacher confers the Elaborate Empowerment (*spros bcas kyi dbang*) by means of a *maṇḍala* of colored powder.

He (also) transmits the Commitments (*dam tshig*) and Vows (*sdom pa*).

Afterwards, he confers the Unelaborate Empowerment (*spros med kyi dbang*) by means of a *maṇḍala* and a vase.

At this time, he (also) gives a reading transmission (*lung 'bogs*).

Afterwards, he confers the Empowerment of Exceedingly Unelaborate Symbols (*shin tu spros med kyi brda*).

At this time, the pith of body (*lus kyi gnad*) is taught.

During the period of (confering and receiving) those

(empowerments), one gives gifts to the teacher and organizes a big feast.

It is also said that one offers to a teacher of the transmission of quintessential instructions (*man ngag lung*) whatever is dear and pleasing to oneself, i.e., one's uncles (*khu bo*), father and mother, brothers and sisters (*ming*), children and wife, and wealth.

A feast is also important at this time.

It is said (in other texts) that great compassion and a great feast (are required).

There is no harm (to confer) these Four Empowerments (*dbang bzhi*) with interruptions of months and years or to confer them at once.

Afterwards, it is necessary to keep one's Commitments based on the Empowerments.

One has to keep everything that is said in the Tantras of the general Secret Mantra (*gsang sngags*) and, in particular, that is in accordance with the text *Dam tshig rab 'byed*¹⁸⁸.

Thus, when a teacher endowed with (pure) Commitments, a student endowed with (pure) Commitments, and the conferring of Empowerments endowed with blessing come together, the result of Buddhahood arises without obstructions.

Thus, the qualified teacher alone is important.

The result does not arise (if one is relying on) a teacher with little education and bad character, but instead, he is leading one to evil realms (*ngan song*).

In the Tantra *Ye shes gsang ba* it is said:

“As to a *Vajra*-Teacher not endowed with (pure)

Committments:

Like two calfs bound together falling into an
abyss,

One goes to the *Vajra* Hell with him.”

In the Tantra *Rang shar* it is said:

“An unexamined teacher is an obstruction
(*bdud*) to a student.”

Therefore, the following is said:

“It is of great importance to examine (him) first.
(Moreover,) an unexamined student is an enemy
of a teacher.”

Therefore, (a student) who dwells on faults of his
teacher without seeing his qualities, has to be
abandoned.

With that, (the topics of) how to accomplish a special
receptacle (*rten khyad par can du sgrub pa*) and of
how to ripen the unripened ground (*gzhi ma smin pa
smin par byed pa*)(are concluded).

Now, in order to liberate what has been ripened (*smin
pa grol bar byed pa*), the quintessential instructions
(*man ngag*) of the teacher have to be transmitted.

For instance, if one is doing good agricultural work on a
fertile field, the fruit will ripen.

Likewise, the result will arise, if the Empowerments are

conferred to one's purified mental continuum (*rang rgyud rnam par dag pa*) and if one bases oneself on unbroken Commitments.

Furthermore, it is not sufficient to leave products such as barley (without further processing them).

It is suitable as food only after having cut the crop, and after having the grains threshed, roasted, and grounded.

Likewise, as an uncommon experience (*nyams*), one will achieve Buddhahood out of ever present Buddhahood (*sangs rgyas nas 'bras bu sangs rgya ba'o*) after having practised the precepts (*gdams ngag*) of the teacher in a place without (unfavorable) circumstances.

Furthermore, as for the practice, it is realized in the manner of a beggar or a deer.

As to the first: After having disguised oneself as an ordinary person (*tha mal pa*) in unknown places without anyone recognizing what one knows (*ci shes cha med par*), one realizes (the practice) and resorts to self-control.

Not showing off one's qualities is indicative (*rtags*) of the absence of desire and arrogance.

Not asking questions (about things) such as philosophical systems (*grub 'mtha*) is indicative of the absence of doubt about one's quintessential instructions.

As to the realization in the manner of a deer: After having gone to places without harmful conditions such as mountain hermitages (*ri khrod*) or cremation

grounds (*dur khrod*), one gives up the Three Activities (*bya ba gsum*) and realizes (the practice). Thus, outwardly, one has to give up activities of the body such as (general physical) work or farming. Thereby, the body relaxes and consequently, the channels relax. Relaxed channels again (favour) the arising of the winds in their natural mode . On account of that, the thoughts are not moving. (As to) the activities of the speech: One has to give up speaking much. Being silent, the inexpressible meaning arises in one's mental continuum. The activities of the mind, i.e., all thoughts, have to be abandoned. Directing oneself towards Space and Intelligence, Reality Itself is seen in Immediate Perception (*chos nyid mngon sum du mthong ba*). Furthermore, practice has two (aspects), namely, conception (*blo*) and Intelligence(*rig*). (The first) is the practice by means of conception of meditational objects (*dmigs pa yul gyi blo can*) and (the second) is the practice by means of conception of the self-appearance of Intelligence (*rig pa rang snang gi blo can*). As to the first, it will be shown by taking recourse to categories (*rnam grangs*) and sequential steps (*go rim*), namely, yoga (*rnal 'byor*) of action, meditation, view, and result as yoga of continual action. As to the first, the yoga of continual action: (It consists

of) the action of subduing appearances, the method of letting be naked what appears, and the intention which arises out of it. i.e., the intention of appearance and existence (*snang srid gzhi bzhengs*) emerging (as) ground.

Thereby, the afflictions are transformed (*gnas 'gyur*).

The action (of subduing appearances) has three aspects (*spyod pa gsum*): The action of a beginner consists of avoiding the Ten Unwholesome Actions (*mi dge ba bcu*) and of practising the stages (*rim pa*) of the Ten Religious Activities (*chos spyod bcu*).

Afterwards, body, speech and mind reach their peak by means of the Action of Separating Samsara and Nirvana (*'khor 'das ru shan 'byed pa'i spyod pa*).

Even though there are twenty-one (aspects of) the action of holding the wind (as) yogic discipline (*brtul zhugs rlung 'dzin gyi spyod pa nyer gcig*), here, they are condensed into seven.

First, by means of the action of thoroughly comparing the portals (of all samsaric and nirvanic things) which is similar to a bee searching for its nest, the teachings to be studied (*thos pa'i chos*) and what is alien to them (*chos min*) are distinguished, and objects to be abandoned and their antidotes are recognised.

Afterwards, you subdue afflictions with thoughts, and with meditation you eradicate the afflictions completely.

As its supportive element (*'grogs*), (there is the unusual action) which is like a swallow entering its nest (*thi bya tshang la 'jug pa lta bu*): When the

swallow is entering its nest, it first clears his
uncertainty (about the possible presence) of men.
Afterwards, it enters (it) without wavering (*dzal 'dzol
med par*).

Similar to that, first, one practises by holding onto the
single precept one is trusting in as one's tutelary deity
(*yi dam*) after having cut through doubts by means
of studying.

As its supportive element, there is the unusual action
which resembles the action of a wounded deer.

A wounded deer flees into the mountains on account of
feeling remorse (*gnong gis*) for its injury and stays
by all means alone in caves (*lung phug*) or on
mountain slopes (*ri rtsibs*).

Likewise, due to fear (*'jigs pa*) of samsara, a yogin will
stay by all means alone in places such as cremation
grounds where people are not circulating.

At this time, the action free of speech and expression
(*smra brjod bral ba*) likened to (the action of) a dumb
person is staying like a speechless person without
saying anything after having cut through speech
(*smra ba bcas pa*).

On account of that, the uncertain action resembling the
one of a mad man arises.

Similar to the words of a fool, the speech which is
incoherent and which is rid of grasping (thought)
arises spontaneously.

At this time, the action of not (being aware of) clean and
dirty which resembles the one of dogs and pigs
arises.

This is the action of mixing up everything (*'byol nyog do spyod pa*), arising (on account of not distinguishing) food (in particular) and good and bad (in general).

Having perfected all these (actions), the gloriously subjugating (*zil gyis gnon*), lion-like action arises.

Similar to the lion who has no fear and anxiety at all, it happens to the yogin (*rnal 'byor pa*) too, to master (*snang ba la dbang bsgyur*) appearances after having become free of (grasping at) observable aspects (*rnam pa*) such as appearances.

These actions are labelled “actions that master appearances”.

They arise (as feats) such as the power of inducing faith in other people, the power of healing killed people, miraculous transformations (*'rdzu 'phrul*), and having control over the Four Elementary Forces.

As to the quintessential instruction related to them which is the method of letting be naked what appears (*man ngag tu snang ba gcer bzhag gi thabs*): Having learnt (*bslabs pa*) (to deal with) appearances of anything, their nature becomes completely purified (*chos can gyi rang bzhin dag*), and having learnt (to deal with) the things in their fragmentation (*chos can dum bu*), the reflections (*gzugs brnyan*) (of their nature) become completely purified.

As to the first: It arises out of letting be naked what appears.

At this time, (there is) the intention called “the emerging of appearance and existence as ground” (*dgongs pa snang srid gzhi bzhengs*).

Even though one has not learnt (previously) all
samsaric and nirvanic things, they arise in their
completeness (*dungs kyis*) in one's mind (*blo*).

When this has happened, the Five Afflictions (*nyon
mongs lnga*) will turn into the Five Aspects of Pristine
Cognition and the Five Psycho-Physical Components
will abide as Five Buddha-Families.

(This process is) similar to a blanket changing its colour
(*kha dog sgyur ba*).

(All) these (teachings) have been shown (here in
order to serve) as implement of a (superior)
individual.

There are three (aspects) of giving continuity to
meditation: Meditation inseparably joined with day
and night (*sgom pa nyin mtshan kha sbyor*), the
method of “the letting-be of the ocean” (*rgya mtsho
cog bzhag*) as its quintessential instruction, and the
intention which is leaving (the Six Collections) in the
ground of appearance and existence (*snang srid
gzhir bzhag*).

At this time, the afflictions will be sealed (*rgyas
gdab pa*).

There are three (aspects) of practising (the first aspect
of giving continuity to meditation): The mental fixation
of gods and men (*lha dang mi'i sems 'dzin*), the
meditative stability (*byang chub sems dpa'i bsam
gtan*) of a *bodhisattva* and the intention of the ones
who have gone to bliss (*bde bar gshegs pa'i
dgongs pa*).

There are three aspects of the the meditative stability of a *bodhisattva* : Undetermined natural meditative stability (*rang bzhin gyi bsam gtan lung ma bstan*) also arises in commoners. It is present in the eyes of an archer, in the eyes of a hare or a falcon resting in their nest, and in one's mind with its cognitions wavering from its latency (*bag la bzhag*).

As to the meditative stability of staying on (*bodhisattva*) Levels (*sa la gnas pa'i bsam gtan*): From the vision of the truth (*bden pa mthong ba*) of the First Level up to the absorption of the Seventeenth (*bcu bdun gyi ting nge 'dzin*), there are distinct aspects of meditative stability pertaining to each different (Level).

As to the contrived meditative stability (*bcos pa'i bsam gtan*): (An individual implementing it) is called “sleeping yogin” (*nyal ba'i rnal 'byor pa*).

There are two conditions harming a yogin: Now, at present, food and clothes are harmful.

Ultimately, there is the harm of entering the Three Realms through dreams and karmic propensities.

As their antidote (*gnyen po*) one has to learn the four sessions of meditative stability (*bsam gtan gyi thun bzhi*): The session of meditative stability cutting off the attachment (*zhen pa*) to food, the session of meditative stability cutting off attachment to clothes, the session of meditative stability cutting off attachment to dreams, and the session of meditative stability cutting off attachment to karmic propensities (*bag chags kyi zhen pa*).

Concerning the first, cutting off attachment to food (*zas*

kyi zhen pa bcad pa bsam gtan gyi thun): One relies on various means of extracting essences (*bcud len*) and on profound devices (*rten 'brel zab mo*).

As to the first: By eating air one cuts off the arising (of attachment to food), i.e., (one applies) means of extracting the essences of earth, water, fire, wind, and space, (*sa chu me rlung nam mkha'i bcud len*), as well as means of extracting essences of (herbal) nectar (*bdud rtsi*) and precious stones, etc., (in order to heal) corporeal illnesses and equalize the Elementary Forces.

Profound devices, the second means, are mixtures of (different kinds of) meat, of stones, of herbal extracts, of greens, etc.

Their specific qualities are clarified in texts (dealing with them) especially.

There are two (means) of cutting off attachment to clothes (*gos kyi zhen pa bcad pa bsam gtan gyi thun*): Material devices and wind-absorption.

The first consists of drinking a heat generating, boiled (mixture) of The Three Hot Things (*tsha ba gsum*), of bile of black yaks and of sugar cane.

The second (requires) staying in a cowered posture and concentrating on fire while completely filling up the stomach with the air drawn in before.

Afterwards, the air has to be exhaled slowly through the nose.

In this way, heat is produced and consequently, a non-conceptual state of mind (*mi rtog pa*) arises, and no worms (*srog chags*) grow (in the body).

Concerning cutting off attachment to dreams (*rmi lam gyi zhen pa bcad pa bsam gtan gyi thun*) , there are two (aspects), namely the pith of examination and (the pith) of meditation.

As to the examination: In order to relax one slightly massages the body during several days, and during the nights one has (then) to examine the dreams.

Furthermore, if one dreams predominantly karmic propensities of attachment to the past, the preferential attachment (*zhen chags*) to the past is very strong.

It is of medium difficulty (to clear them).

If one dreams mostly what one has done in the present, it is very easy (to clear it).

If one encounters unknown places and people, it is difficult to cut off (such dreams).

If one dreams the three (types of dreams) in an arbitrary way, the three karmic propensities are joined together (and consequently) very difficult (to clear).

Then, concerning the meditation, one apprehends and purifies, transforms, and cuts off.

As to the first: After having formulated one's aspiration, one has recognize as dreams whatever one is dreaming and one has to meditate on dream(-like quality) and illusoriness (*sgyu ma*) of all appearances and sounds.

(Finally) one has to seal (all of) it with emptiness.

Transforming consists of transforming all appearances into one's tutelary deity and of meditating on them (in this manner).

Cutting off implies the discontinuity of dreams on

account of meditating on the pith of Intelligence.

Thus, as to the full measure of its cultivation: The excellent (practitioner) cuts off the continuity of dreams, the mediocre one retains them in memory and the inferior one dreams wholesome karmic propensities.

Fourth, as to cutting off attachment to karmic propensities (*bag chags kyi zhen pa bcad pa bsam gtan gyi thun*): Purposely, one has not to abandon what one has, one has not to search for what one does not have, and one should not be attached strongly to what one has.

Furthermore, since one's mind is not relying at all on antidotes against pursuing the past, against welcoming the future and against present karmic propensities, appearances are liberated in their appearance, and thereby, fixation on concreteness (*dngos po 'dzin*) is purified by itself (*rang sar dag*).

Thus, the act of liberating the appearances themselves in the immediacy of their appearing (*snang thog tu*) is similar to a little bird carried away by a falcon, the liberation of moving (thoughts) in the immediacy of moving thoughts resembles a cold breeze (*snang gi ser bu*), and the dissolution of consciousness and appearances (*snang shes*) into non-duality (*gnyis med*) is like water dissolving into water.

By that, one is beyond the reach and range of delusive (*'khrul pa*) karmic propensities and the attachment to a self-oriented view (*bdag tu lta ba*) is cut off.

The intention of the ones who have gone to bliss (*bde*

bar gshegs pa'i dgongs pa) implies that there is throughout day and night no meditation and post-meditation (*mnyam rjes med pa*), because one has passed beyond (having) session breaks (*thun mtshams*).

As to the mental fixation of gods and men: Even though twenty-one (aspects) are shown in the text *Snying gzer*¹⁸⁹, here one (only) has to meditate on seven (of them).

First, a diligent individual has to accumulate merit (*tshogs bsags*) by doing things such as pleasing the teacher.

Afterwards, in accordance with one's intent, one sits cross-legged on a comfortable seat and focuses one's mind on the symbol of a white syllable "A".

As to that, one has to meditate on a white "A" (at the level of) the tip of nose.

When the air is exhaled, this "A" has to abide far out (in the sky).

When (the air) is drawn in, one's mind is completely focused on this white "A" abiding (again at the level of) the tip of nose.

Furthermore, if one's body has a sickness (caused by) heat, (the white "A") has to be meditated on as being cool to the touch.

It is not possible that (out of that) does not arise a meditative experience of the unborn (*skye med*) which is free of thoughts.

As to holding one's mind onto the fierce expression "PHAT" which clears away obstacles (*bar gcod*):

Having relaxed one's body and mind as before and having placed one's consciousness in its natural state (*rang sa*) for a little while, one utters in a exceedingly fierce manner (the expression) "PHAT".

Out of that comes (a state of) blank (*had pa*) consciousness.

At this time, Pristine Cognition has to be identified (*ngos gzung*) and (therefore), the (blank) consciousness has to be clearly brought out (*gsal gdab*) by uttering "PHAT" again and again.

On account of having practised this day and night (*nyin mtshan phyed mar*), an utterly pure meditative experience will undoubtedly arise.

If one is no longer interested in this (practice), one has to hold one's mind onto the laughter of the fierce deities (*khro bo*): After having placed the body, etc., as before, one has to utter fierce and short "HA, HA" (syllables) and has to focus the consciousness on "HA".

The pith is to utter forcefully "HA" and to mix speech, consciousness, and wind in the case of whatever unpleasurable sensation such as discursive thoughts arises in one's mind.

Undoubtedly, a meditative experience of ungraspable pure Reality Itself (*ngos gzung dang bral ba'i chos nyid*) will arise on account of having meditated all the time in such a manner.

It is said to be important that one is neither damming up nor bending the consciousness and that one utters in a state of equipoise (*mnyam par*) when one is

relying on (the practice) of speech.

Again, if one is no longer interested in this (practice), one has to hold one's mind on the struggle of the anti-gods (*lha ma yin*): After having placed the body, etc., as before, one has to abide in a place such as on top of a rock of a high mountain, and in the beginning, during three or four days, one has to twist slowly the head and the body.

Then, one rotates them forcefully, that is, one has to rotate them as forcefully as one's physical condition is able to cope with.

Thus, after having done (this practice) without going beyond the seal (*phyag rgya*) of movement, the outer appearances cease, and (a state of mind) arises of which the essence cannot be established at all.

It is not possible that out of that (practice) does not arise a meditative experience of the Self-Liberation (*rang grol*) of visions (*mthong snang*).

At this time, one has to rely on food which is favourable to one's wind (*rlung la shis pa*).

The pith is to focus one's mind on the syllable "RAM" at the level of one's navel.

If one is no longer interested in this (practice), one has to hold one's mind on pursuing discursive thoughts by means of (the syllable) "HUNG".

That is, one has to utter "HUNG" exceedingly slowly and sonorously.

The pith is to mix (the sound) with the breath (*rlung*).

From time to time, "HUNG" has also to be uttered in

rapid succession (*thung bar yang brjod do*).

It is not possible that out of that (practice) does not arise a meditative experience of the coming forth of discursive thoughts as Reality Itself, after having done it for a long time without reposing.

If one is no longer interested in this (practice), one has to focus one's mind on the gradual (experience of) emptiness: After having applied the pith of the body, etc., as before, one has to split up the body into many parts and investigate their various names.

On account of having done an individual analysis of each name (*ming don so sor btags pas*), one will know that the body can not be established as a thing.

Then, as a result of having investigated and labelled likewise the various names of all outer appearances, one will not find at all something which could be established (as a thing).

Thus, one will understand that all labels are empty, and in addition, the (labelled) things too, will become empty.

Following that, it is not possible that (labels and labelled things) are not gradually passing into Reality Itself which is emptiness.

Again, if one is no longer interested in this (practice), one has to stay conscious of whatever forms of appearances, and one's mind (*blo*) has to rest instantly in their utter emptiness.

At this time, whatever one is looking at is set free into emptiness.

After having meditated in this way for a long time, it is

not possible that appearances in their totality do not immediately pass into emptiness like one's breath imprinted (on the surface) of a mirror.

Moreover, first is the appearance (of forms), second their (Self-Liberation into) emptiness, and third their non-establishment (*ma grub*) as a thing.

Such a meditation is labelled "meditation inseparably joined with day and night" (*nyin mtshan kha sbyor gyi sgom pa*), because what is beyond the (nirvanic) day is the night, i.e., the samsaric part (of the day).

At this time, (the outcome of) the inseparable union of samsara and nirvana is called "Reality Itself which cannot be established as a thing".

At this time, (day and night) have to be joined without there being a reason that the meditation of the day is particularly clear, nor a reason that the (meditation of) the night is particularly unclear.

As to the quintessential instruction of this (practice), that is, "the letting-be of the ocean" (*man ngag rgya mtsho cog bzhag*): Because the nature of the eyes is water, they are called "ocean".

Whatever is meditated on, the pith is to leave the eyes as they are (*mig rang sor cog gis 'jig pa*).

There is no meditation if one is not meditating (in this way).

The pith is to not have the eyes closed when meditating.

Similar to the ocean which is not contaminated, even though reflections such as reflections of planets and stars may appear in vivid clarity on its surface, there

are objects appearing (*snang yul*) (to one's mind),
but one is not lost in the immediacy of their
appearance after having done this (practice).

Recognizing them as (mere) appearances without
determining anything (*gang du yang ma bcad
par*) is called “meditation on abiding in the natural
state” (*rang sar 'dug pa la sgom*).

Having passed during meditation into a state without
memory after the cessation of the Six Collections
(*tshogs drug*) is called “falling in the extreme of inner
calm” (*gzhi gnas*), and this is a deviation (*gol sa*)
from meditation.

Thus, when the consciousness is not tainted by
appearances and when it is not judging them, it is
clear to itself (*rang sa la gsal*).

This is called “the intention which is leaving (the Six
Collections) in the ground of appearance and
existence” (*dgongs pa snang srid gzhir bzhag*) and
is the explanation of the final meaning of what
previously was called “emerging as ground”.

Here, verbal elaboration is set aside.

Thus, as to the liberation of all collections into the
natural state after having left (them) in the ground:
Everything that has arisen as collections of
appearance and existence, of names and letters, is
liberated (directly) in the natural state without dwelling
on words, after having left (them) in the ground.

This is called “leaving it in the mode of being of the
actuality of the ground” (*gzhi dngos po'i gnas lugs*).

Because affliction itself is sealed at this time, its

essence arises as Pristine Cognition.

Therefore, it is certain that the variety of appearances and (their) labels (*snang btags*) instantaneously arises as *dharmakāya*.

This is similar to the instantaneous coming out of a clay image (*tshwa tshwa*) after having put an engraved mold on clay.

At this time, the (meditative abiding of) the individual is labelled “time of abiding in the teaching”.

When all samsaric and nirvanic things are present by themselves in the immediacy of one’s mind (*blo thog*), their abiding in the natural state without any preceding or impending analysis is called “meditation”.

All this has been explained in the Tantra *Nyi zla kha sbyor*.

As to the yoga which preserves continuously the view (*lta ba la rgyun du byed pa’i rnal ’byor*): There are two views, that is, the general and the specific.

The general view is represented by the different view points (*’dod lugs*) of each of Nine Graduated Vehicles (*theg pa rim dgu*).

They are views (relying on) words (*tshig gi lta ba*), holding onto assumptions (*yid dpyod ’dzin pa*).

The specific view is the view of the Great Perfection which is spontaneously present (*lhun grub*) and free of effort (*bya bral*).

Looking at outer things (*phyi chos can*), one sees that they are without any (inherent) nature (*rang bzhin med pa*).

Looking at the inner Reality (*nang chos nyid*), one sees that it is unborn (*skye ba med pa*).

Looking at the secret Self-Intelligence (*gsang ba rig pa*), one sees intelligence in actuality (*mngon sum*).

Moreover, the way of seeing is as follows: Looking with the *vajra*-eye (*rdo rje'i mig*) at the things in their fragmentation (*chos can dum bu*), one sees the appearances of things like a mirage or a dream of last night.

In this way, one understands that delusion (*'khrul pa*) is not established in reality (*yang dag par*), and one's mind is at ease (*blo bde*), because (from) now there will be no return to the Three Realms (*khamsgsum*).

Looking at the diversity of things (*chos can bye brag*) with the eye of discriminative awareness (*shes rab kyi mig*), the objects of relative truth (*kun rdzob kyi don*) are distinctly appearing (*rnam par snang ba*), but one sees them like a mirage without inherent nature.

In this way, one realizes that Reality Itself is ungraspable, one's mind being at ease, because Intelligence is no base of karma and karmic propensities.

Looking at the inner Reality with the eye of Pristine Cognition (*ye shes kyi mig*), one sees (its) inseparable equality (*mnyam*) with Intelligence.

Consequently, there is no grasping at a truth existing in itself (*rang rgyud*) as to Reality Itself, because by realizing (its) freedom from conceptuality as utterly

pure, one knows Reality Itself as having no inherent nature.

And so, after the falling away of the philosophical tenets (held) by oneself, (all) things are exhausted.

Therefore, one has now become free from attachment to grasping at things as real and one's mind is at ease.

Looking nakedly (*gcer bzhag*) at the secret Self-Intelligence with the eye of utterly pure Reality Itself (*chos nyid rnam par dag pa'i mig*), one actually sees Self-Intelligence itself as inseparable union of Space and Intelligence.

Consequently, one realizes that one will not attain Buddhahood through assumptions which are based on words.

That is, having no confidence in assumptions which are based on words, one's mind is at ease.

As for that, it is (effectuated) through the pith of seeing Reality Itself as sphere of one's senses (*dbang po'i spyod yul*).

These (ways of seeing) are subsumed under the label "view cutting off the continuity of the city" (*grong khyer rgyun gcod kyi lta ba*).

That is, it is the view of no return to the Three Realms after having cut off the continuity of the city.

Afterwards, the diligent superior practitioner (*rab*) will attain Buddhahood without there being an appearance of what is defiled (*zag bcas*).

As for the mediocre practitioner (*'bring*) who has asked for the precepts of the teacher, but

who, due to laziness, did not have an opportunity to practise them: Relying on the blessing of the Truth of Reality Itself (*chos nyid bden pa'i byin rlabs*), one finds relief (*dbugs phyung*) in the pure realms of the actual *nirmaṇakāya*.

The certainty of attaining Buddhahood from these (pure realms) after having taken instantaneous birth there, is labelled “cutting off the continuity of the city” (*grong khyer rgyun gcod*).

Its quintessential instruction consists of the view of “the mountain-like letting-be” (*ri bo cog bzhag*): For example, when one has gone to the top of an exceedingly high central mountain, one sees the Four Continents (*gling bzhi*) simultaneously.

Likewise, one realizes the stand (*'dod pa*) of each tradition of the Nine Graduated Vehicles when looking from above, (that is, from the higher point of view of) the Great Perfection (*Rdzogs chen*).

The other vehicles, however, do not see what is the stand of the Great Perfection. Insofar as this (view) is unchanging, it is (labelled) “the mountain-like letting-be”.

As for its intention: It is the intention of complete liberation of the Three Realms (*kham s gsum yongs su grol ba'i dgongs pa*).

When a yogin who has realized the Great Perfection in this way, is looking at (the things of the Three Realms), there is not even a single thing which is not liberated.

The time of this realization is labelled “liberation of the Six Kinds of Beings (*‘gro drug rang sar grol ba*) in their natural state”.

At this time, the afflictions are naturally purified.

They are like clouds vanished (*dengs pa*) in the sky or like turbid water having become transparently clear.

As for that: It has arisen out of the pith which knows from the beginning no error, which now is not abiding in error, and which ultimately gives no chance to error.

To label (the experience arising) at this time “individual who has given up the teachings” means that there is no teaching at all to be practised.

To take the result (*‘bras bu*) as way means that there is no reversal of the ultimate result, (and in this respect), it resembles the fruit of a pomegranate tree.

(The experience arising) at this time (is) also (labelled) “the king having definitely captured his residence for ever”.

As for that, the analogy of a child of royal descent having definitely seized his kingdom for ever after having been crowned, stands for the Intelligence itself which has been captured in its natural state.

(It is also labelled) “definite subjugation of one’s subjects”.

As for that, the analogy of the king residing in his royal dominion stands for the non-existence of the (mere) name of samsara on account of the emptiness of the ground which lets arise the consciousnesses of

the five sense-doors (*sgo lnga'i rnam shes pa*).

As for the labelling it “to have definitely put the minister into prison for ever”: The analogy of the king who also is endangered after having put his minister into prison stands for the attainment of independance of Intelligence following the discontinuance (*chad pa*) of the flow of the conceptual thinking of subjective intention (*yid kyi rnam par rtog pa*).

This kind of result is labelled “naturally pure result”. It has not arisen out of deliberate exertion (*byas pa'i rtsol ba*).

That is, the label “result” standing for the birth of the forever (*ye nas*) pure ultimate (*don*) in one's mental continuum is (merely) a conventional designation (*tha snyad*).

As for its quintessential instruction: (If one asks) out of what such a result has arisen by (applying) the so called “letting-be of Intelligence” (*rig pa cog bzhag*), (the answer is that) it has arisen out of leaving Intelligence Itself as it is (*bzhag pa*) in the face of all that appears or arises.

Its intention is labelled “primordial purity of the Three Forms of Existence” (*srid gsum ka dag gi dgongs pa*).

(Here, the fact that) there is a total absence (*mi gnas pa*) of karma, karmic propensities, and discursive thoughts pertaining to one's body, speech, and mind, is labelled “primordial purity of the Three Forms of Existence”.

At this time, the afflictions are self-liberated (*nyon mongs rang grol*).

That is, similar to knots of a snake which are untied in no time, the afflictions are liberated by themselves into Reality Itself without having any time to arise.

(The result arising) at this time is labelled “the individual who has transcended the teaching”.

One is free of a consciousness apprehending (*‘dzin pa*) anything, be it samsara or nirvana.

These are (the aspects) of the practice by means of conception of meditational objects, and they are meant for people loving elaborations concerning what is ultimate.

Now, the practice by means of conception of the self-appearance of Intelligence (*rig pa rang snang gi blo can*) will be shown.

It has two (aspects), namely, Cutting Through (*khregs chod*) and Leaping Over (*thod rgal*).

Cutting Through is the instantaneously manifest (*mgnon sum*) realization of (the natural state) itself which has no relation to appearances.

Concerning the practice of the Leaping Over: First, one has to perfect (the experience of) the Four Empowerments.

Afterwards, the quintessential instruction (consists of) the preliminaries (*sngon ‘gro*) and the main part (*dngos gzhi*), (this being the case for) both modes of realization (*bsgrub lugs*) mentioned above.

As for (the preliminaries represented by) the Three Actions of Separating Samsara and Nirvana: First,

one has to put into action the separation of the body.
The marks (of successful implementation) have to
reach their peak (*rtags tshad la phebs*).

(Then), one has to put into action the separation of the
speech, and finally - the indications (of successful
implementation) having reached their peak - one has
to put into action the separation of the mind.

Each of these (three aspects of the preliminaries) has
both, a supreme and a common purpose (*mchog gi
dgos pa dang thun mong gi dgos pa*), making six
altogether.

Afterwards, there are three (aspects of) bringing down
to naturalness (*rnal du dbab pa gsum*) to be
practised: The purpose of bringing the body down to
naturalness is to enhance the (Five) Psycho-Physical
Components, the (Five Inner) Properties, the (Six)
Sense Fields, and the seminal fluid (*byang sems*).

Afterwards, the purpose of bringing down the speech to
naturalness is the transformation of verbalization
(*brjod pa*) for the sake of what is uncontrived (*ma
bcos pa'i don*), being the exhaustion of verbal
concepts and investigations (*tshig gi rtog dpyod*).

Afterwards, the purpose of bringing down the mind to
naturalness is the liberation from (any) object of
attachment (*zhen yul*) of thinking.

Afterwards, there are four (aspects) of how the mental
continuum of a yogin has to be based on the
undefiled (*zag pa med pa*) ultimate, this being the
main part (*dnegos gzhi*) (of the practice):

First, one has to pierce (*gzir ba*) the pith of body, speech, and mind¹⁹⁰.

Then, (there is the second aspect of) how the mental continuum of the yogin has to rely on the meaning of the Immediate Perception of Reality Itself (*chos nyid mngon sum*) through recourse to (*brten nas*) the Three Piths¹⁹¹.

How appearances are arising by that (is the third aspect).

(The fourth aspect) is the quintessential instruction of the final support (*mtha' rten*)¹⁹².

First, the pith of the body is not to go beyond the Three Postures (*gzhugs stangs gsum*).

Moreover, Pristine Cognition of Intelligence is abiding in the body, but if one is not piercing the pith of the body, it will not appear in actuality.

This resembles (the fact) that the extremities of a snake are not seen if one is not squeezing (its body).

Afterwards, speaking (*smra ba*) has to be cut off.

Thus, in the first phase of training (*bslab pa*) one trains one's speech in short sessions, then one trains it in longer ones.

Occasionally, one speaks, even though there is no reason (to do so).

Afterwards, as for the dwelling (in) one's speech: One's speech (reciting) mantras, verses of offering and praises (*mchod bstod*), *sūtras*, etc., has not to be blocked.

To others however, one should not even speak a single word.

At this time, one should also abstain from gesticulating.
It is certain that the inexpressible ultimate (*don*) will
arise in one's mental continuum after having done this
(training of one's speech).

Vimalamitra says (*zhal nas*) that a yogin having the
power to cut off speech will have the power to
practise the teachings.

The pith of mind is to never be separated from the
Three Piths (*gnad gsum*).

Thus, the pith of the sense-door (*sgo'i gnad*) consists
of not being separated from the Three Ways of
Gazing (*gzigs stangs gsum*).

The pith of the place (*yul gyi gnad*) consists of not
being separated from the sky which is the Outer
Space.

(Doing so) one's Intelligence has to be focused on the
Inner (Space) which is the Lamp of Utterly Pure
Space (*dbyings rnam par dag pa'i sgron ma*).

The pith of the wind (*rlung gi gnad*) consists of
sustaining smoothness (of breathing) by all means
and of expelling (the air) afar.

The pith of Intelligence (*rig pa'i gnad*) consists of
holding the *Vajra*-Chains in prison.

Moreover, there are three modes (of instruction): First,
as for the context of instructing the disciple, there is
the mode of pointing out (*ngo sprod pa*) (the natural
state) at the point of death.

(Second), there is the guiding explanation (*khrid du
bya ba*), and (third), there is (the mode of)

transmitting the instructions in completeness

(*tshang sprugs su*).

There is no doubt that here, through the mode of the guiding explanation, one will gain mastery (*'byongs pa*) in one and a half months.

Moreover, first one has to do short and many sessions.

Second, the sessions have to be prolonged.

Afterwards, on account of having practised day and night, the Four Visions will appear.

The marks of their successful implementation (*rtags tshad*)¹⁹³ can be found in other (texts).

As for the Vision of the Immediate Perception of Reality

Itself: (First), the teacher gives an explanation condensed into the three statements: What kind of pith of the body one has to apply, how one has to apply the pith of the speech, and what kind of pith of the mind one has to focus on.

Then, seeing it in immediate perception, one is free of the verbal elaborations of intellectual analysis.

The Vision of Increasing Experiences (extends) up to the point of the direct realization (*mthong*) of Reality Itself in the sphere (*yul*) of the emptiness of the sky - there being no distortion (*bslad pa*) caused by discursive thoughts - conjoined with (the vision of) (light-)drops and Buddha-Bodies (emerging) from Space.

Moreover, the five colours (of light) stand vertically and arise horizontally (*rtsibs la shar ba*).

(They are seen like the colours seen through) a black buckler (*re lde*), and (they have the size of) a square

(*gru chad*), or of about a district (*yul gru*), etc.

There are shapes (of the five colours of light) such as stacked up *stūpas* (*mchod rten brtsegs pa*), lotus flowers with thousand petals (*padma ston ldan*), domes (*gur khyim*), checkered designs (*mig mangs ris*), sieves (*mig tshags*), and lattice work.

Afterwards, at the time of the vision of the Five Buddha-Bodies, Intelligence reaches its peak.

Then, as for the liberation of the grasping mind (*'dzin pa'i blo*) into its natural state (*rang sa*), (arising) after the exhaustion of the increasing (phases) of these (visions): This is the Vision of Exhaustion of Reality Itself.

Thus, at the time of the conclusion (*mthar phyin pa*) of the Four Visions, it is certain that the fortunate one (*skal ldan*) will attain Buddhahood without there being an appearance of the defiled aggregate.

Fourth, as for the quintessential instruction of final support (*mtha' rten*): The foundation has to be laid with the Three Aspects of Motionlessness (*mi 'gul ba gsum la gzhi bca'*) the progress has to be measured (*tshad bzung*) with the Three Aspects of Abiding (*sdod pa gsum*), and the stake (of confidence) has to be planted (*gzer 'debs*) with the Three Aspects of Attainment (*thob pa gsum*).

These (aspects) are set forth as support (of the practices) mentioned above.

With them, the exposition of the meditational methods is concluded.”

It is beyond the scope of this work to treat all the different aspects of *Rdzogs chen* practice. Nevertheless, it is intended to give a general overview of them. On account of the relative compactness of the Eighth Theme, it is not always easy to have a clear picture about the actual significations and the many divisions of the practices presented here. Thus, in order to clarify various aspects of this text, it was necessary to consult mainly two sources, namely the sixteenth and seventeenth chapter of the *TCZ* and the *Rnal 'byor bzhi'i rim pa* of the *ZMYT*¹⁹⁴. These two sources have been chosen, because both of them treat the subject “practice” by means of four main sections, i.e., view, meditation, action, and result, in a way very similar to the one presented here in the text.

Thus, the Eighth Theme begins with an explanation of how one has to ripen what is not yet ripened in order to be able to practise in a proper way¹⁹⁵.

- *To ripen what is not ripened (ma smin pa smin par byed pa):*

This part includes the explanation of the qualities of a suitable teacher and of the characteristics of a worthy recipient (*snod ldan*), followed by short indications concerning the Four Empowerments (*dbang bzhi*) and the Commitments (*dam tshig*) based on them¹⁹⁶.

It should be noted that the third empowerment is missing in the text. It is in the two parts called “the empowerments and the attendant commitments” (*dbang dang de'i grogs dam tshig*) of the *TCZ*¹⁹⁷ where one finds more detailed information

about what represents the condition *sine qua non* or stepping-stone for entering any higher tantric teachings.

1. Thus, the first of the Four Empowerments (*dbang bzhi*), i.e., the Elaborate Empowerment (*spros bcas kyi dbang*) is conferred by means of things like a *maṇḍala* and a vase in order to transmit the power over one's bodily sphere which is transformed into a tutelary deity (*yi dam*). This deity incorporates the outer world looked at as a precious palace, as well as the body envisaged as the glorious body of the deity with all its ornaments, and is called "Great Seal" (*phyag rgya chen po*), because it seals the ordinary deluding appearances with its pure presence. The final purpose of this sealing is the liberation of one's material body into a body of light.
2. The Unelaborate Empowerment (*spros med kyi dbang*) is the second empowerment and it is aimed at letting resound the mantra of a tutelary deity as outer aspect and at initiating the experience of its inexpressible meaning as inner aspect.
3. The transmission of the third one, i.e., the Exceedingly Unelaborate Empowerment (*gsang ba shin tu spros pa med pa'i dbang*), by means of symbols (*brda*) such as a visualised consort (*rig ma*) and auspicious circumstances (*rten 'brel*) brings the mind down to its actual inner disposition opening the way to experience the meaning of the Clear Light.
4. Fourth, the Secret Unsurpassable Empowerment (*gsang ba bla na med pa'i dbang*) which corresponds

to the Empowerment of Exceedingly Unelaborate Symbols of the text implies a simultaneous ripening of body, speech, and mind. Thus, applying bodily postures, one gains liberation in the condition of the Three Buddha-Bodies. Cutting off one's speech, sound loses its power and one realizes the meaning which cannot be expressed by sound. Mind, finally, is directly introduced to the empty Clear Light by means of the pith of symbols expressing its meaning with various procedures and objects such as a crystal or a mirror.

The *TCZ* then continues with the statement that the perfection of the ripening of the body effectuates the immediate vision of the Developing Phase (*bskyed rim*). The perfection of the ripening of the speech is accompanied by unusual spiritual capabilities, and when the ripening of mind is perfected one displays the marks of the Completion Phase (*rdzogs rim*) having reached their peak. The simultaneous perfection of the ripening of body, speech, and mind implies the accomplishment of the practice of the Vision of the Immediate Perception of Reality Itself (*chos nyid mngon sum gyi snang ba*).

Although there are many divisions of Commitments (*dam tshig*), essentially, they refer to the relation of the student to his teacher. That is, the student has to please him by means of bodily actions such as offering him a seat or a *maṇḍala* or prostrating oneself in front of him. With one's speech one praises his profound knowledge of the Buddhist texts and mentally, one never goes in one's practice beyond what he is thinking to be correct. The reason for such a respectful

behaviour towards one's teacher is the assumption that one cannot escape from samsara without his skilful help.

- *The liberation of what has been ripened (smin pa grol bar byed pa):*

Then comes what in the text is called “liberation of what has been ripened” (by means of the Four Empowerments). Its first two parts - the realization in the manner of a beggar and the realization in the manner of a deer - exemplify the kind of attitude needed to practise the quintessential instructions of the teacher¹⁹⁸.

- *How the practice has to be done (ji ltar nyams su blangs ba):*

The following main part of the Eighth Theme is called “how the practice has to be done” (*ji ltar nyams su blangs ba*) and consists of the practice by means of conception of meditational objects and the practice by means of conception of the self-appearance of Intelligence. The first is meant for students with intellectual propensities and consequently offers a rather extensive guiding explanation preparing the entrance into what is ultimately certain according to *Rdzogs chen*.

The second one emphasizes a rather different approach to what is ultimately certain, because here one is straightforwardly introduced to it by the royal road of Intelligence (*rig pa*) without having recourse to the conceptions of the conditioned mind (*sems*). Both

approaches, however, have the power to liberate the student already in his present life.

- *The practice by means of conception of meditational objects (dmigs pa yul gyi blo can):*

From among the four parts of the practice by means of conception of meditational objects (*dmigs pa yul gyi blo can*), the yoga of the continual action (*spyod pa la rgyun du byed pa'i rnal byor*) is explained first¹⁹⁹.

- *The yoga of the continual action (spyod pa la rgyun du byed pa'i rnal byor):*

1. The first of its three parts²⁰⁰, i.e., the action of subduing appearances (*snang ba dbang sdud kyi spyod pa*)²⁰¹, consists of three parts treating the Ten Unwholesome Actions (*mi dge ba bcu*) and the concomitant Ten Religious Activities (*chos spyod bcu*)²⁰², the Separation of Samsara and Nirvana (*'khor 'das ru shan 'byed pa'i spyod pa*)²⁰³, and the action of holding the wind (as) yogic discipline (*brtul zhugs rlung 'dzin gyi spyod pa*).

Obviously, the expression “holding the wind” (*rlung 'dzin*) does not here refer to any breathing technique, but to the process of blocking and finally dissolving the discursive thinking of conditioned mind (*sems*). Seven actions which support this process are mentioned in the text. They are said to be similar to the actions of a bee, a swallow, a wounded deer, a dumb person, a dog or a pig, and a lion.

2. The quintessential instruction²⁰⁴ related to these seven actions is the method of letting be naked what appears (*man ngag tu snang ba gcer bzhag gi thabs*) which has two parts whereof the second one is not explained very clearly in the text. Thus, according to *TCZ*²⁰⁵, in the very moment of looking nakedly or directly at whatever appears to Mind Itself (*sems nyid*), it dissolves immediately like snow having contact with a hot stone. Looking in this way at the things in their fragmentation (*chos can dum bu*) without losing the state of Mind Itself (*sems nyid*), one is liberated from one's attachment (*zhen 'dzin*) and recognizes that despite the fact that appearances lack ultimate truth, they nevertheless appear, and they do so in the manner of a reflection (*gzugs brnyan*), a mirage (*smig rgyu*), a dream (*rmi lam*), etc. Second, having learnt what is meant by Unborn Reality Itself (*chos nyid ma skyes pa*), one understands that the nature of appearances is forever peaceful or empty of inherent existence.

The *RBBR* offers in this part an explanation of the Four Ways of Liberation (*grol lugs bzhi*) which should not be understood as a kind of sequence, but rather as different aspects of the same process of liberation²⁰⁶.

Thus, Forever Available Liberation (*ye grol*) is likened here to Space which never has been bound by anything and refers to Mind Itself being free forever.

The basic assumption of *Rdzogs chen* that one does not need any antidote such as purifying or transforming in order to get rid of what is unwholesome is termed "Self-Liberation" (*rang grol*) .

Liberation Upon Arising (*shar grol*) emphasizes the point

that whatever arises is liberated without there being a gap between its arising and its liberation.

That the one who is perceiving, immediately disappears into its perceived objects without there being any differentiation between them is Immediate or Naked Liberation (*cer grol*).

3. As *Klong chen rab 'byams* remarks²⁰⁷, the third part of the yoga of the continual action, i.e., the intention of appearance and existence emerging (as) ground (*dgongs pa snang srid gzhir bzhengs*), is a kind of intention which arises on account of applying the quintessential instruction mentioned above and which presents itself as being completely unobstructed. In order to elucidate what is meant by it, he quotes then the Tantra *Klong drug pa* where it is said that what is appearing to Mind Itself without there being any hope or fear is called "the intention having confidence in letting be as it is forever" (*ye bzhag gdeng ldan dgongs pa*).

According to the *RBBR*²⁰⁸, worlds (*snod*) and living beings (*bcud*) are experienced in this phase without obstruction, because they arise as mere play (*rtsal*) of their immediate Liberation Upon Arising (*shar grol*) which, of course, has its origin in Intelligence (*rig pa*). On account of that, they cannot harm one's staying in Intelligence. On the other hand, one's staying in the Space of Intelligence does not block appearances. Therefore, its vast and all-encompassing Space is called "intention of appearance and existence emerging as ground".

4. As a result of this yoga, the Five Afflictions are transformed into Pristine Cognition (*nyon mongs gnas 'gyur*).

Interestingly, there seems to be some mixture with tantric thought, because the transformation of afflictions and not their Self-Liberation (*rang grol*) or dissolution - the method proper to *Rdzogs chen* - is placed in the foreground. *Klong chen rab 'byams* is in his *TCZ*²⁰⁹ not giving any information about this point, but in the corresponding passage of the *RBBR*²¹⁰ one finds the key term “Self-Liberation” (*rang grol*), thus confirming the assumption that the student is here supposed to liberate or dissolve and not to transform afflictions.

- *The yoga of the continual meditation (sgom pa la rgyun du byed pa'i rnal 'byor):*

Now, as to the second main part of the practice by means of conception of meditational objects, i.e., the yoga of the continual meditation (*sgom pa la rgyun du byed pa'i rnal 'byor*)²¹¹:

1. Its first part is called “meditation inseparably joined with day and night” (*sgom pa nyin mtshan kha sbyor*)²¹² and begins with an explanation of the meditative stability of a *bodhisattva* (*byang chub sems dpa'i bsam gtan*)²¹³ which forms the first of the three parts of the meditation inseparably joined with day and night. Unlike the mental fixation of gods and men (*lha dang mi'i sems 'dzin*) - see below - the meditative stability of a *bodhisattva* (*byang chub sems dpa'i bsam gtan*) principally is not produced, but rather naturally arising (*ngang ngam shugs kyis skye ba*), there being no discursive thoughts. This meditative stability,

however, has not the power to show what is ultimately real.

Klong chen rab 'byams says in this context²¹⁴ that mere non-conceptuality (*rtog med*) is not what is meant by Intelligence (*rig pa*), because Intelligence is not merely a lack of discursive thoughts, but embodies also the Clear Light.

In order to elucidate what is meant by “undetermined natural meditative stability” (*rang bzhin gyi bsam gtan lung ma bstan*)²¹⁵ - the first part of the meditative stability of a *bodhisattva* - the text gives the example of the eyes of an archer who is focusing on his target. In this very moment of focusing, his eyes do not move and mind and its activities are blocked. Although no more conscious about anything, he is not asleep during this phase, but dwells in the all-ground of consciousness (*kun gzhi*) and completely lacks the clarity of awareness (*gsal ba*) so typical of *Rdzogs chen*.

The meditative stability of staying on (*bodhisattva*) Levels (*sa la gnas pa'i bsam gtan*) represents the second part and it refers to the various mental absorptions as main characteristic of the practice of these levels. Such absorptions, however, merely purify the karmic propensities of their respective levels²¹⁶.

As antidote for a meditative state which is marked by mere inner calm (*zhi gnas*) - an individual staying in such a state is called “sleeping yogin” (*nyal ba'i rnal 'byor pa*) - the contrived meditative stability (*bcos pa'i bsam gtan*) is recommended. This meditative stability is contrived by the intellect (*yid kyis ched du bcos*) and embraces both, a non-conceptual meditative absorption (*ting nge'dzin mi rtog pa*) and the practice of a Developing and a Completion Phase having recourse to conceptions (*rtog bcas lha'i bskyed rdzogs*)²¹⁷,

and other similar stabilities such as the four sessions of meditative stability (*bsam gtan gyi thun bzhi*) of the text²¹⁸.

Second comes in the text the part called “intention of the ones who have gone to bliss” (*bde bar gshegs pa'i dgongs pa*) which is characterised by the capability to meditate day and night without interruption on the appearances of the Motherly Reality Itself (*chos nyid ma'i snang ba*). The two aspects of it, i.e., remaining in an uncontrived (state) (*ma bcod bzhag pa*), and (having) the vision (of *Rdzogs chen*) without meditating (*ma bsgom ltas pa*), are mentioned in the Tantra *Nyi zla kha sbyor*²¹⁹. Unfortunately, they are neither explained there nor in the *TCZ* where the relevant passage of this Tantra is quoted. One is merely told that on account of remaining in an uncontrived state one's sensations (*'byung tshor*) of samsaric appearances are blocked and that due to the visions coming up without meditation one gains the warmth of realization (*drod tshad rnyed*). Nevertheless, *Klong chen rab 'byams* also cites²²⁰ in the beginning of his explanation of the term “intention of the ones who have gone to bliss” the Tantra *Rig pa rang shar* which relates this term to the sky-gazing and the appearances of Pristine Cognition evolving from it.

Third, as for the mental fixation of gods and men (*lha dang mi'i sems 'dzin*): It consists of holding one's mind on the white syllable A, on the fierce expression PHAT, on the laughter of the fierce deities, on the struggle of the anti-gods, on the pursuit of discursive thoughts, on the gradual (experience of) emptiness, and on the instantaneous emptiness of whatever forms of appearances²²¹. All of them can be traced back to the Tantra *Nyi zla kha sbyor*²²², except for the the fourth one,

which seems to have its origin in the *Snying thig ya bzhi*.

Similar to the Tantra *Nyi zla kha sbyor*, the *TCZ* too, offers a list of twenty-one mental fixations²²³ whereof, however, not all correspond to the fixations presented in the Tantra mentioned above. Moreover, *Klong chen rab 'byams* arranges them into three sevenfold series.

Thus, the first brings about the abiding of one's mind in its place (*bdun tshan dang pos rang sems gnas su bzhug pa*), the second effectuates the separation of the attachment to body and mind (*gnyis pa lus sems 'dzin zhen dbral ba'i gnad bdun*), and the third renders possible the perception of Reality itself (*gsum pas chos nyid mthong ba bstan pa'i bdun tshan*). The sixth and the seventh mental fixation of the text form part of the third series and the remaining five belong to the first.

Now, as for the relationship between the three practices of the meditation inseparably joined with day and night (*sgom pa nyin mtshan kha sbyor*): In the *RBBR* one finds an interesting passage²²⁴ saying that the mental fixation of gods and men (*lha dang mi'i sems 'dzin*) is meant for beginners, because the mind has to be fixed on an objective reference in order to calm it.

When there is no longer any need to intentionally produce a state of meditative absorption, one has attained the meditative stability of a *bodhisattva* (*byang chub sems dpa'i bsam gtan*), and having stabilized one's perfection of staying in an uncontrived state, one stays in the intention of the ones who have gone to bliss (*bde bar gshegs pa'i dgongs pa*). *Klong chen rab 'byams* emphasizes the point that these three states merely represent three steps of increasing perfection of mental fixation and not three different states.

2. The method of “the letting-be of the ocean” (*man ngag rgya mtsho cog bzhag*) as quintessential instruction of the yoga of continual meditation (*sgom pa la rgyun du byed pa’i rnal ’byor*) primarily refers to the eyes which are compared with an ocean. “Letting be” means neither moving nor closing them. Furthermore, in the *RBBR* one finds the statement that they are called “ocean” on account of their power to let arise the radiation of the great transparent clarity. Their power to do so, however, is made accessible by means of light-channels transporting this self-radiation of Mirror-Like Pristine Cognition from the heart (*tsitta*) to the eyes which are called “water lamp” (*chu’i sgron ma*) in this context²²⁵.

In the text, the deviation from this quintessential instruction is termed “falling in the extreme of inner calm” (*gzhi gnas phyogs gcig tu lhung ba*) and refers to a rather diffuse state lacking any input of the Six Collections (*tshogs drug*)²²⁶.

The *RBBR* calls it “deviation into the blocked mediation of a *śrāvaka*” (*nyan thos ’gog pa’i sgom du gol ba*) and adds several other deviations. Among them are the grasping at the clarity (of mind), the staying in a state of mere emptiness, the craving for bliss, and a kind of stiff equanimity. Despite their differences, all of them share the characteristic of being distortions in the sense that they represent positions of holding onto one-sided or extreme views²²⁷.

3. Thus, when the consciousness is not blocking appearances and, nevertheless, is not tainted by them, one dwells in the intention which leaves (the Six Collections) in the ground of appearance and existence (*dgongs pa snang srid gzhir bzhag*) and, in contrast to the intention of appearance

and existence emerging (as) ground (*snang srid gzhi bzhengs kyi dgongs pa*), there is no longer any need to have recourse to words in order to understand what is meant by Self-Liberation (*rang grol*)²²⁸.

4. At this time, afflictions are sealed by Reality Itself (*nyon mongs pa rgyas gdab pa*). “Sealing” means that one still has to check afflictions, i.e., to stare at them in order to dissolve them into Pristine Cognition, but unlike transforming (*nyon mongs gnas ‘gyur*), sealing requires no longer any significant effort to do so.

- *The yoga which preserves continuously the view (Ita ba la rgyun du byed pa’i rnal ‘byor):*

From among the four parts of the practice by means of conception of meditational objects (*dmigs pa yul gyi blo can*), the yoga which preserves continuously the view consists of the view (*Ita ba*), “the mountain-like letting-be” as its quintessential instruction (*man ngag ri bo cog bzhag*), and the intention of complete liberation of the Three Realms (*kham s gsum yongs su grol ba’i dgongs pa*)²²⁹.

1. Thus, the general view (*spyi’i Ita ba*) comprehends the views of the Nine Graduated Vehicles (*theg pa rim dgu*)²³⁰ whereof all but the vehicle of *Rdzogs chen* are understood as views relying on words, holding onto assumptions²³¹.

As specific view (*rang gi Ita ba*) is presented here the effortless, spontaneously perfect view of the Great Perfection

(*rdzogs pa chen po bya bral lhun gyis grub pa'i lta ba*).

Although not explicitly classified, one clearly can distinguish its three parts, i.e., the view of outer things, inner reality, and secret Intelligence²³².

Moreover, four eyes²³³ are mentioned in this context. The vajra-eye (*rdo rje'i mig*) and the eye of discriminative awareness (*shes rab kyi mig*) are related to the two aspects of the view of outer things, i.e., the things in their fragmentation (*chos can dum bu*), and the diversity of things (*chos can bye brag*), respectively. The first aspect rather emphasizes an understanding of the ultimate emptiness of outwardly appearing things, whereas the second implies more the continuity of this understanding in the midst of the diversity of dream-like outer appearances. Having applied the twofold view of outer things, one see the inner Reality Itself by means of the eye of Pristine Cognition (*ye shes kyi mig*) and recognizes that this reality is not a mere emptiness, but is imbued with Intelligence. The eye of utterly pure Reality Itself (*chos nyid rnam par dag pa'i mig*) finally, understands Intelligence as an inseparable union of Space and Intelligence²³⁴.

2. The method of “the mountain-like letting-be” (*man ngag ri bo cog bzhag*) serves as the quintessential instruction of these three specific views made accessible by four eyes.

According to the *RBBR*, this instruction implies a certainty on what is meant by Intelligence, the natural resting place of all views, without being tainted by assumptions, doubts or misconceptions about it. Having cut off all doubts, one finally rests in a blissful state which is stable like a mountain²³⁵.

3. Out of this stability arises in oneself an understanding of self-arisen Pristine Cognition being the real meaning of the view. Because all things in their immediacy are viewed as primordially liberated, one realizes that there is no need to liberate them again, and no longer searching and striving for what is meant with vision, one dwells in the intention of complete liberation of the Three Realms (*kham s gsum yongs su grol ba'i dgongs pa*).

4. At this time, afflictions are naturally purified (*nyon mongs gnas dag*), because one has passed beyond the urge to abandon them. But although it is no longer required to check if they dissolve or not, one still is lacking the capability to stay without interruption in the view made accessible through their dissolution.

- *The yoga of the continual result ('bras bu la rgyun du byed pa'i rnal 'byor):*

The yoga of the continual result (*'bras bu la rgyun du byed pa'i rnal 'byor*) represents the fourth part of the practice by means of conception of meditational objects (*dmigs pa yul gyi blo can*) and is arranged in three parts²³⁶.

1. Its first part is called “naturally pure result” (*rang bzhin rnam dag gi 'bras bu*), because it arises without any effort, and it is explained by means of three analogies. Thus, the permanent dwelling in the state of Intelligence (*rig pa*) is

compared to a king who has definitely captured his residence for ever. The definite subjugation of one's subjects (*'bangs cham la phebs te mi 'gyur ba*) refers to the five sense-consciousnesses which have no longer the power to condition one's staying in Intelligence, but present themselves as mere play of Intelligence (*rig rtsal*)²³⁷. The version of the third analogy to be found in the text - to have definitely put the minister into prison for ever (*blon po btson du zin te mi 'gyur ba*) - seems to be incomplete. According to the *TCZ*²³⁸, the superior minister of a king has been definitely put into prison by another king, and the king who has lost his minister now has to obey this other king. Likewise, having rendered innocuous the flow of mental consciousness, one's Intelligence has gained command over them.

2. In order to realize such a result, one takes recourse to the quintessential instruction of the "letting-be of Intelligence" (*de'i man ngag tu rig pa cog gzhaq gi thabs*). Here, Intelligence is said to pervade everything without contrivance or distortion, because one already knows how to continue in the state of Intelligence during the natural arising, staying, and liberation of whatever makes its presence felt²³⁹.

According to the *RBBR*, the whole range of piths concerning consciousness (*shes pa'i gnad*) can be condensed into three teachings²⁴⁰. Thus, one has to leave the Five Sense-Consciousnesses as they are (*cog bzhag*) when their respective five outer objects appear. The same procedure of "letting be" has also to be applied to the inner aspect, i.e., the flow of inner mental sensations, and to the secret aspect of empty Intelligence radiating inside its resting place which is the

dharmakāya. Ultimately, whatever arises, be it appearance or consciousness, it is empty of conceptuality when experienced as self-radiation by means of the method of “letting be”.

3. Having followed such an instruction, one is free from hope and fear and dwells in the intention of the primordial purity of the Three Forms of Existence (*srid gsum ka dag gi dgongs pa*)²⁴¹.

4. At this time, the Self-Liberation of afflictions (*nyon mongs rang grol*) is definitively realized, i.e., there is no longer any need to check them²⁴².

With that, the brief description of the various parts of the practice by means of conception of meditational objects (*dmigs pa yul gyi blo can*) is concluded and now the practice by means of conception of the self-appearance of Intelligence (*rig pa rang snang gi blo can*) has to be looked at.

- *The practice by means of conception of the self-appearance of Intelligence (rig pa rang snang gi blo can):*

It consists of two parts whereof the first, i.e., the Cutting Through (*khregs chod*) is not something to be developed after having done the practice by means of conception of meditational objects (*dmigs pa yul gyi blo can*), because it is rather the natural outcome of this practice. This could explain

why it is not treated as specific practice in the text²⁴³. Another reason simply could be the fact that the text rather lays stress on the Leaping Over (*thod rgal*)²⁴⁴ which constitutes the second part. Its preliminaries (*sngon 'gro*)²⁴⁵ consist of the three actions of Separating Samsara and Nirvana (*'khor 'das ru shan dbye ba'i spyod pa gsum bya ba*)²⁴⁶.

Basically, one is supposed here to perform without second thoughts whatever corporeal, vocal or mental action comes to mind in order to separate mind (*sems*) from Intelligence (*rig pa*)²⁴⁷. The text mentions six aspects of their supreme and common purpose, however without explaining them. Thus, according to the *TCZ*²⁴⁸, their common purpose is the pacification of obstacles and the purification of unwholesome actions and obscurations of body speech and mind, whereas the attainment of Body, Speech, and Mind of a Buddha (*sku gsung thugs*) is accounted for as supreme purpose.

Having performed the Three Actions of Separating Samsara and Nirvana, one concludes the preliminaries with bringing down to naturalness (*rnal du dbab pa gsum*) one's body, speech, and mind in order to stabilize the state of Intelligence (*rig pa*) made accessible through the preliminaries.

- *The Arisal of the Four Visions (snang ba bzhi)*²⁴⁹:

In the text, one finds a short but comprehensive presentation of the Four Visions. Nevertheless, it is worth looking at other texts treating them in detail in order to facilitate an understanding of what is meant by these visionary experiences.

To begin with, the *KDYT*²⁵⁰ clearly explains their relation to the Four Lamps (*sgron ma bzhi*). According to this text, the way (*lam*) starts with the application of the Three Postures (*bzhugs stangs gsum*) and the Three Ways of Looking (*gzigs stangs gsum*).

On account of applying them, first, the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space arises which then shelters the Lamp of Empty Drops of Light arising in it. Inside the drops of the latter, the self-radiation of the Channel having a Crystal-Cavity (*shel sbug can*) lights up as *Vajra-Chains*. It is in the very moment of the stabilization of these chains that the Lamp of Self-Arisen Discriminative Awareness makes its presence felt as a kind of consciousness which is clear and empty and beyond conceptuality.

When the pliancy of the Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a Distance is attained, one is at ease in using any of the Three Ways of Looking.

The full efficacy of the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space is visible as self-clarity (*rang gsal*) exposing space adorned with five-coloured light-drops, and the self-clarity of the place proper to Intelligence is brought about by means of the adaptability of the Lamp of Empty Drops of Light.

As to the *Vajra-Chains*, their stability is realized through the fully developed power of the Lamp of Self-Arisen Discriminative Awareness. Thereby, first the channels and then flesh, blood, and bones are transformed into light. Thus, after having identified the Four Visions (*snang ba bzhi*) by applying the postures and ways of seeing, one liberates oneself in the pure realm of the *sambhogakāya* and

accomplishes the nirvana without remainder (*lhag med*) in this very life²⁵¹.

Below in the same text, one is given specific advice on how to eliminate flaws concerning the Four Lamps. Thus, it is recommended to apply medical substances and mantras in order to rectify the Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a Distance.

When the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space is only vaguely arising, one should not look too closely at the sun. The ideal distance is said to be a cubit (*khru gang*).

In case of difficulties concerning the Lamp of Empty Drops of Light it is imperative to look at the visions of space (*dbyings kyi snang ba*) without trying to alter them.

Vajra-Chains which are not stabilized in Outer Space are indicative of a deficient functioning of the Lamp of Self-Arisen Discriminative Awareness. Relaxed breathing is recommended here to mend it. On account of these measures, the visions of the lamps increase in the first three Visions and then, in the fourth vision, finally dissolve into the Clear Light of the ground.

A principal source succinctly treating the arising and dissolution of the Four Visions (*snang ba bzhi*) so often quoted in the works of *Klong chen rab 'byams* and in many texts of the *Snying thig ya bzhi* is the Tantra *Sgra thal 'gyur chen po*²⁵²:

“The Vision of the Immediate Perception of Reality Itself
surely emerges from the doors of the sense-organs
and lights up in the cloudless sky.

The Vision of Increasing Experiences implies the

manifestation of the colours of Pristine Cognition in Outer (Space).

Thus, the five colours (of light) stand vertically and arise horizontally, the light-drops (harbour) various Buddha-Bodies, and Intelligence lights up in this environment of appearances (*snang ba'i yul*).

In the Vision of the Intelligence Reaching Its Peak the the Major and Minor Marks (*mtshan dpe*) of the *sambhogakāya* light up, and out of the indeterminate colours of the rainbow the couples of the Five Buddha-Families appear.

The Vision of Exhaustion of Reality Itself is empty of any experience of visions, the body and the sense-organs are also exhausted, the delusory assemblage of thoughts is liberated, and one finds oneself beyond words which form the basis of verbal expression.”

The following short definition of these visions presented in the *KDNYT* is similar to the preceding one, but instead of their visionary aspect, here their cognitive aspect is stressed²⁵³:

“The Four Visions are arising according to the text ‘*Das rjes* as follows:

The Vision of the Immediate Perception of Reality Itself abolishes the view which holds onto intellectual analysis.

The Vision of Increasing Experiences makes the

Pristine Cognition of the Intermediate State (of Reality Itself) visible.

The Vision of the Intelligence Reaching Its Peak recognizes the *sambhogakāya*.

The Vision of Exhaustion of Reality Itself implies the attainment of the result which is the non-action of the Great Perfection (*Rdzogs chen*).

When one has mastered these Four (Visions), there is no longer any need to search for nirvana anywhere else.”

The reasons for having four of such visions and for having a fourfold sequence of them are given In the *TCZ*²⁵⁴:

“Moreover, the number of visions is determined to be four in view of the fact that outwardly, there is increase and exhaustion (of life) in four seasons, that inwardly, there is the liberation of body, speech, intention, and mind, that secretly there is the revelation of the certainty of the Four Empowerments, and that ultimately, there is the certainty of the appearances of the Four Lamps.

As for their determined graduation: If one does not see first the Immediate Perception of Reality, one lacks the ground for the arising of the three remaining ones.

Therefore, first arises the Vision of the Immediate Perception of Reality Itself as ground being the base on which (the three other ones) are based.

Since one sees the meaning of all that is on account of

its arising, (this vision) is called “Self-Arising Pristine Cognition which is obtained from oneself”.

Then, if one does not experience this immediate perception, one merely (remains on the level of) words and the result will not arise.

On the other hand, on account of the implementation of its meaning, it is experienced in an ever increasing intensity.

Thus, it is necessary to gain stability in the full measure of its experience.

If there is no (such) stability, one will not (really) get into its (real) experience, one will not (be able) to seize what is real (*chos*), and the cause for Buddhahood will not arise.

On the other hand, if one reaches the full measure of the stabilization of its experience, the Vision of the Intelligence Reaching Its Peak manifests.

Even if the Vision of Intelligence is Reaching here Its Peak, (it is not admissible to assume) that it does not become (finally) something else, because (if this were not the case), there would be no difference to the assumption that the Three Buddha-Bodies are the (final) result²⁵⁵, and having the expectation that the concretely appearing things with their defining characteristics are the final result would not set oneself apart from common people.

Unlike that, the experience of visions has to dissolve in the ground, i.e., through one’s engaging in the primordial purity of the exhaustion of all that is, which follows the extinction (of any inclination) to grasp at

(vision) as something subtle or coarse, the Vision of Exhaustion of Reality Itself arises.”

Both, the arising and the dissolution of such visions, are looked upon as necessary for the attainment of Perfect Buddhahood, defined as being without remainder of psycho-physical aggregates (*phung po lhag med*)²⁵⁶:

“What is called “being without remainder of psycho-physical aggregates” (*phung po lhag med*) has to be understood as follows: When one has practised in such a way, the Five Elementary Forces naturally disperse, and the grasping at one’s body (as something concrete) ceases by itself.

Therefore an ordinary (body) (consisting of) flesh and blood does not appear.

The (Buddhahood) without remainder²⁵⁷ results from the vanishing of coarse appearances (such as) earth and stones which comes about by the cessation of the Outer Five Elementary Forces.

The ordinary body (consisting of) flesh and blood has gone and it has no longer any place where it could go.”

The faults arising when one is lacking the Four Visions are discussed in the *BMNYT*²⁵⁸:

“As for the ascertainment of the Four Visions coming out of the practice of the meaning of Pristine Cognition (which forms) the main part of the practice: If one does not see the Vision of the Immediate

Perception of Reality Itself, Reality Itself turns into a (mere) assumption.

If one is not seeing the Vision of Increasing Experiences, there will be no difference between oneself and common people.

If one is not seeing the Vision of the Intelligence Reaching Its Peak, the quintessential instruction of the teacher will be falsified in its very truth.

If one is not seeing the Vision of Exhaustion of Reality Itself, the Reality (envisioned) in its immediacy will turn into a thing.”

Even though the exhaustion of visions which follows their cultivation is prerequisite to gaining final liberation, liberation itself transcends both, making fully accessible the whole range of appearing and non-appearing aspects of the Buddha-Bodies²⁵⁹:

“The example for the Self-Liberation in the ever present great primordial purity (occurring) after the perfection of the Four Visions (is set up as follows): Light (naturally) arises in a polished crystal, but as soon as the concomitant condition of sun-rays is lacking, the Five Lights (*‘od lnga*) are (again) dwelling in inner clarity (*nang gsal*) after having dissolved there.

Similar to that, one may be tainted by the mire of the delusory subject-object structure (*gzung ‘dzin*), because one has not recognized one’s own essence (in the light arising) out of the primordial purity in outer clarity, but nonetheless, (this mire will be) removed by

practising the instruction of the Four Visions, and after the completion of what is arising like the Five Lights (of a crystal) in the arising of the Vision of the Intelligence Reaching Its Peak, one will reach the level of the Exhaustion of Reality Itself (*chos nyid zad sa*).

Furthermore, the dissolution (of the visions) in their primordial ground resembles the dissolution of the Five Lights into (a crystal). At this time, the Youthful-Vase-Body (*gzhon nu bum pa'i sku*) is found, and this dissolution is neither dull, nor is (its) clarity proliferating, and (its) Intelligence is spontaneously accomplished as the very freedom from conceptuality.

Thus, (its) essence is the *dharmakāya*, because it is empty, (its) nature is the *sambhogakāya*, because its nature is clear, and its compassion is the *nirmanakāya*, because (the ground is marked) by Intelligence.

(These three aspects) which are accompanied by Pristine Cognition are spontaneously accomplished (in the ground) as inseparable union.

Then again, charismatic activities for the sake of beings to be tamed are performed instantaneously by means of the appearance of the *sambhogakāya* and the *nirmanakāya* without moving out of the *dharmakāya*, and they are constantly (available) as long as samsara is not yet emptied, their continuity is not broken, and their vast miraculous display (*rnam par 'phrul pa*) arises without limitation.”

- *The definition of the Four Visions:*

1. The definition of the Four Visions is given in the *TCZ* and the *TDZ* by means of the explanation of the individual syllables constituting the terms in question.

Thus, the syllable *chos nyid* in the term *chos nyid mngon sum gyi snang ba*²⁶⁰ is further analysed into *chos* and *chos nyid* whereof *chos* denotes Samsara and the lack of liberation on account of not being in the possession of the piths of practice. On the other hand, *chos nyid* represents nirvana and the certainty of liberation made accessible through the piths of practice. A further definition rather emphasizes complementarity than opposition. Thus, seen from the perspective of the inseparability of Space and Intelligence, *chos* symbolizes Space and *chos nyid* Intelligence.

Indicative of Intelligence becoming visible in immediate perception is the syllable *mngon pa*. Even though Intelligence makes itself felt in the form of visions of Clear Light, these visions should not be confused with common appearances which are said to be aggregates of the Four Elementary Forces. Unlike the latter ones, the former ones do not fall a victim to final destruction, because they can not be delimited as a specifically characterised thing (*dnegos po rang mtshan*).

From among the various denotations of the syllable *sum*, first ranks its denotation as a fourfold set of outer, inner, secret, and unsurpassable levels each of them exhibiting three aspects.

First, relying on the outer level consisting of the three piths of body, speech, and mind (*lus ngag yid gsum gyi gnad gsum*), one lays the foundation of the *thod rgal* practice.

Second, applying the three piths of place, (*yul gyi gnad*), sense-door (*sgo'i gnad*), and wind-Intelligence (*rlung rig gi gnad*), one removes obstacles of the way which represents here the inner level.

Third, one experiences the three aspects of the graduation of becoming accustomed to practice which represent the secret level. Thus, on account of becoming accustomed to the visions of light, light-drops, and Buddha-Bodies (*goms pa tshad kyi rim pa*), delusive appearances naturally dissolve . Consequently, one perceives various signs indicative of the full maturation of the visions (*smin pa rtags kyi rim pa*) and finally realizes their complete exhaustion into Reality Itself (*mthar thug zad pa'i rim pa*).

Fourth, the unsurpassable level refers to one's accomplishment of the result being the outcome of the arising of Intelligence as light, its ripening as light-drops, and its perfection as the Three Buddha Bodies. Moreover, the syllable *sum* symbolizes the self-radiation of the Three Buddha Bodies (*sku gsum gyi rang gdangs*). In this context, the perceiving agent being empty Intelligence, is the self-radiation of the *dharmakāya*, the outer clarity of the Five Lights as its field of perception is the self-clarity of Pristine Cognition representing the self-radiation of the *sambhogakāya*, and the simultaneity of the arising and liberation of thoughts is expressive of the self-radiation of *nirmanakāya*.

The two syllables *snang ba*, finally, denote that what is arising is Reality Itself, that the place where it is arising is the Outer Space, and that the mode of its arising implies the felt presence of various forms of light such as the *Vajra-Chains*.

2. According to the *TCZ*⁶¹, the syllable *nyams* in the term *nyams gong 'phel gyi snang ba* corresponds to the mental (*shes nyams*) and visual experiences (*snang nyams*) gained through meditation. On the one hand, the former ones are worldly experiences characterised by an attachment of the mind to the bliss gained in meditative absorption and they find their expression in the wish to do such things as singing *Vajra-Songs* or dancing *Vajra-Dances*. On the other hand, insofar as they are non-worldly mental experiences (*shes nyams*) they are marked by the realization of the transcendence of the extremes of exclusive emptiness and exclusive clarity.

From among the three stages distinguished with regard to non-worldly experiences, the experience of mental bliss (*shes pa dga' bde'i nyams*) is the first. As mentioned above, unlike its worldly counterpart, this non-worldly mental experience is completely free of any attachment. It is not the outcome of a contrived meditation (*bcos ma'i sgom pa*) being not considered as stable, because it is created by mind, but something naturally arising out of the empty Clear Light.

The second experience is called “eventually changing experience” (*mthar 'gyur gyi nyams*) and is intimately related to eight appearances of the experience of wind (*rlung nyams kyi snang cha*) which resemble fireflies, clouds, smoke, shimmering mist, the arising moon, arising stars, the dark-blue sky as present during the early night, and the complete transparency at dawn. Since this experience is not stable on account of being an experience of the moving wind, it is called “eventually changing experience”, and this experience has to be produced in order to purify mind and its concomitant wind (*rlung sems*).

The great Clear Light which is the self-radiation of Intelligence marks the third experience, i.e., the visual experience (*snang nyams*). Provisionally, this radiation has to increase and reach its peak or full measure as outer clarity, but ultimately, it has to exhaust itself in order to dissolve again into the ground. In the space of the natural light (*rang 'od*) in its inner clarity, there is neither any shifting nor any changing of Intelligence in the great spontaneous perfection of the primordial dwelling in the palace of Buddha-Bodies and their aspects of Pristine Cognition.

Klong chen rab 'byams then emphasizes the point that the main accent is put here on visual experience, because the mental experience is primarily a product of the conditioned mind and consequently subject to change. Moreover, there is no chance to see the ultimate meaning of what really is in all its immediacy without relying on the visual experience. In short, it is the latter which is beyond subject and object and it consists of the vision of the colours of the Five Pristine Cognition (*ye shes lnga'i kha dog gi snang ba*) and the vision of Space (*dbyings kyi snang ba*).

The ever increasing intensity of the experience of the brilliance of the visions, of their well-shaped forms and of their multiplicity is denoted by the two syllables *gong 'phel*.

Thus, when the five luminous visions appearing as vertically standing light-rays, as horizontally arising light-rays, as squares, as chunks, and as banners are perfected, one has gained power over the five colours of Pristine Cognition and consequently, the Five Afflictions of desire, hatred, stupidity, pride, and envy no longer openly manifest, but remain in latency.

When one sees half-nets, nets, checkered designs, sieves, and brocade tents, one finds oneself beyond any conceptualization of the Five Psycho-Physical Aggregates as being a self-entity.

Then, on account of luminous visions arising as pure forms of Pristine Cognition, as mansions of Pristine Cognition, as sun and moon in conjunction, as piled up lotus flowers, as stacked up *stūpas*, and as lotus flowers with thousand petals, one is freed from the fetters of the Five Elementary Forces.

Furthermore, since these visions are coming and going, they are called “experiences” (*nyams*), and in order to denote their ever developing intensity, the term “increase” (*gong ‘phel*) is used.

3. The two syllables *rig pa* in the term *rig pa tshad phebs kyi snang ba*²⁶² indicate the actual outer manifestation of Intelligence residing forever in its primordial ground (*gzhi gnas kyi rig pa*).

The syllable *tshad* refers to the development of the at first only partly manifest Buddha-Bodies into their fully perfected form, and *phebs pa* emphasizes the point that there is no going beyond that as far as visions are concerned.

4. A concise explanation of the individual syllables of the term *chos nyid zad pa’i snang ba*²⁶³ concludes the discussion of the various denotations of the syllables forming the terms in question.

Thus, *chos* comprises the assemblage of body, speech, mind, and their concomitant afflictions, *nyid* symbolizes the visions of Clear Light which purify this assemblage, and *zad*

pa, the last two syllables, refer to the non-conceptual emptiness which is reached after the dissolution of the visions into the primordial ground.

- *The Vision of the Immediate Perception of Reality Itself*
(*chos nyid mngon sum gyi snang ba*):

Having discussed the various denotations relating to the Four Visions (*snang ba bzhi*), a detailed exposition of each of these visions largely based on the *KDYT*²⁶⁴ comes next.

Thus, *Klong chen rab 'byams* begins his discussion of the Vision of the Immediate Perception of Reality Itself (*chos nyid mngon sum gyi snang ba*) with two quotations drawn from the Tantras *Sgra thal 'gyur* and *Klong gsal*. The first one which forms part of the quotation already translated above²⁶⁵ merely says that this vision will light up by means of the apertures of the sense organs in the cloudless space, and the second one mentions vacillating luminous forms such as rainbows, patterns of colours resembling the eyes of a peacock's feather (*rma bya'i mdongs lta bu*), and light-drops connected with *Vajra-Chains*.

Commenting on these two quotations, *Klong chen rab 'byams* says that it is the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space (*dbyings rnam par dag pa'i sgron ma*) that initially lights up like a rainbow or like the coloured pattern of a peacock's feather in the space around one's eyebrows (*rang gi smin mtshams su*). The light-drops which arise inside it indicate the presence of the Lamp of Empty Drops of Light (*thig le stong*

pa'i sgron ma) and resemble concentric ripples on a pond (*ko mo*) elicited by a stone thrown into it or to luminous seeds arising on a round plate of a shield (*sba skor*). Inside it, the two- or threefold Vajra-Chains of Intelligence take shape like delicate knots tied in a strand of a horse's tail, like strings of pearls, like iron chains, like different kinds of lattice-work (*drwa ba dang drwa phyed*) of flowers stirred up by the wind.

Then comes again a quotation from the Tantra *Klong gsal* confirming the principal assumption of *thod rgal* that Space and Intelligence (*dbyings rig*) are like sun and sunrays inseparably related to each other. Light-domes arising in this vision are understood as signs of Space (*dbyings kyi rtags*), Pristine Cognition manifests as light-drops, and *Vajra-Chains* represent Buddha-Bodies. Moreover, the quotations drawn from the Tantras *Rig pa rang shar* and *Seng ge rtsal rdzogs* emphasize the fact that the vacillating *Vajra-Chains* are a sign of the Buddha-Bodies endowed with the Five Aspects of Pristine Cognition (*ye shes lnga*).

The mode of being (*gnas lugs*) of this vision is ever present in the Precious Palace of the Heart (*tsitta rin po che'i gzhal yas khang*) as initially pure essence, as nature lighting up as Buddha-Bodies and light, and as all-pervading compassion. The following quotations from the two Tantras *Klong gsal* and the *Nor bu phra bkod* emphasize the basic assumption of *Rdzogs chen* that these three aspects of the ground (*gzhi*) dwelling in the heart have the potential (*rtsal*) to arise as visions of the way (*lam snang*) through the medium of the eyes.

Three quotations from the *Sgron ma rnam bkod*²⁶⁶ explain the full measure of experience (*nyams blangs tshad*)

consisting of the full measure of seeing, of habituation, and of stability. Thus, the full measure of seeing is the light manifesting as unchanging blue of Space, as clear circular formations (*zlum 'khrigs*) of the lamps, and as subtle quickly moving *Vajra*-Chains of Intelligence. The five-coloured light spreading out of the blue Space and reaching the size of about a cubit (*khru gang*) is indicative of the full measure of habituation to Space, the light-drops developing into brocade-like patterns (*za 'og ris*) represent the full measure of the lamps, and the full measure of Intelligence is realized when the *Vajra*-Chains are soaring like birds in the sky. As far as the full measure of stability is concerned, it will be treated in the context of the third vision.

The valuable property of seeing this vision is according to two quotations from the *Klong gsal* and the '*Das rjes* the definite departure from samsaric realms which is realized by seeing Intelligence in its immediacy and the fault related to this vision is according to the '*Das rjes* the inability to see it.

The aim is twofold: For the time being one is free from holding onto views based on assumptions and ultimately one leaves behind for ever the Three Samsaric Worlds, because one is no longer tainted by the duality of wholesome and unwholesome actions.

- *The Vision of Increasing Experiences* (*nyams gong 'phel gyi snang ba*):

The passage of the KDYT²⁶⁷ dealing with the Vision of Increasing Experiences does not investigate the signs relating

to consciousness (*shes nyams*), because they are looked upon as signs of conditioned mind, being per se superficial and mistaken. The visual signs (*snang nyams*) have three levels of liberation which refer to what is outside oneself, what is inside one's body, and what is said to be the secret level of one's afflictions. Thus, the light-radiation of Pristine Cognition stabilizes itself through the increase of outwardly appearing visions. Inwardly its increase is felt as light completely pervading one's energy channels, and secretly, one gets rid of one's afflictions.

Klong chen rab 'byams quotes then the two Tantras *Sgra thal 'gyur* and *Klong gsal* which give some indications about the luminous forms encountered in this vision. Thus, according to the *Sgra thal 'gyur*, the five-coloured lights of Pristine Cognition lighting up in Outer Space stand vertically (*gyen 'greng*) and arise horizontally (*rtsibs la shar ba*). Besides that, various light-drops harbour Buddha Bodies and countless visions of Intelligence manifest as *Vajra-Chains*.

In the passage quoted from the *Klong gsel*, the amplification of the various luminous forms and light-drops and the stabilization of the *Vajra-Chains* of Intelligence are likened to a seed developing in a fruit.

After these two quotations, *Klong chen rab 'byams* explains the different ever intensifying phases of this vision. Thus, at the beginning, the visions of Space and Intelligence (*dbying rig*) are sometimes clear, sometimes not.

In the next phase, these visions separate from the Space around one's eyebrows (*dbyings rig smin mtshams las bral*) and extend ever more into outer space. At this time, the light-drops reach the size of peas.

Subsequently, *Klong chen rab 'byams* gives advice for the different eye-positions to be taken in order to envision various luminous forms such as fragments of light (*dum bu*), vertically standing five-coloured lights (*gyen 'greng*), etc.

A Sign of further intimacy is the lighting up of forms such as shooting spokes of a wheel and points of spears (*mdung rtse*). Here, Intelligence (*rig pa*) arising in and as such visions slows down slightly to the velocity of a bird flying through the sky, and a passage quoted from the *Sgron ma snang byed* says that in this phase the light-drops initially reach the size of a buckler and then the size of a mirror.

The next phase is characterised by visions of different kinds such as lattice-work (*drwa ba dang drwa phyed*), vajras, wheels, swords, checkered designs (*mig mangs ris*), sieves (*mig tshags*), lotus flowers with thousand petals (*padma ston ldan*), fire-tongues, fish-eyes, etc. The light-drops reach the size of a clay bowl and Intelligence slows down to the velocity of a deer running on a pasture.

As mentioned in the quotation drawn from the *Sgron ma snang byed*, in the last phase of this vision, the light pervades the whole world and inside countless light-drops and Vajra-Chains reside the Buddha-Bodies of Vajrasattva (*Rdo rje sems dpa'*), Ratnasambhāva (*Rin chen 'byung ldan*), Amitābha (*Snang ba mtha' yas*), Amoghasiddhi (*don yod grub pa*) and Vairocana (*Rnam par snang mdzad*).

Some of them merely manifest the upper part of their body, others light up in their fully developed form. The light-drops become like rhinoceros-skin shields (*bse phub*) and Intelligence slows down to the velocity of a bee revolving on the nectar of flowers. Having gained certainty about the

Intermediate State of Reality Itself (*chos nyid kyi bar do*) in this very lifetime on account of realizing the last phase of this vision, one will not experience it after having died.

According to the quotation drawn from the *Klong gsal*, it is exactly the final mastery of this vision enabling the practitioner to exhaust this intermediate state that makes up its ultimately valuable property (*yon tan*). Not accomplishing the Self-Liberation of this intermediate state is defined as the fault (*skyon*) related to this vision.

From among the two aims or benefits (*dgos pa*), the temporary one refers to the various valuable properties of this vision experienced during its different phases, and the final one implies the Self-Liberation of the intermediate state mentioned above.

- *The Vision of the Intelligence Reaching Its Peak*
(*rig pa tshad phebs kyi snang ba*):

The passage of the *KDYT*²⁶⁸ dealing with the Vision of the Intelligence Reaching Its Peak (*rig pa tshad phebs kyi snang ba*) begins with the usual quotations from Tantras such as *Klong gsal* or *Thal 'gyur* describing the extent of this vision which then is commented upon by *Klong chen rab 'byams*.

Then follows a quotation from the *Sgron ma snang byed* explaining the three kinds of the full measure of stability relating to Intelligence (*rig pa brtan pa'i tshad*), Space (*dbyings ni brtan pa'i tshad*), and Lamps (*sgron ma brtan pa'i tshad*).

Thus, the first of the three kinds of the full measure of

stability implies that whatever is arises as Buddha-Bodies. The second results from the complete ceasing of appearances of the Four Elementary Forces (*'byung ba bzhi*) and manifests as manifold forms of five-coloured light. The third becomes visible above one's body as light-drops piled up like basins of metal (*mkhar gzhong*). At this time there is the connection between the heart of the luminous forms of the *sambhogakāya* and one's heart effected by subtle light-rays. Outwardly (*phyi*), what has appeared such as earth, stones, etc., has naturally dissolved on account of its liberation into Clear Light. Inwardly (*nang*), one's illusory body (*sgyu lus*) dissolves into light that results in the complete ceasing of one's material body. Secretly (*gsang ba*), the delusory appearances decline on account of the dissolution of what is arising as mind (*sems*) and one's connection with one's personal karma and karmic propensities is cut off.

The liberation of whatever concretely appears in a dualistic way is the valuable property (*yon tan*) of realizing the full measure of this vision, and not purifying what appears in this way marks the fault (*skyon*) of not reaching the limit of this vision.

The aim of this vision is twofold: For the time being, even without practising, these visions remain stable, and ultimately, having identified the *sambhogakāya*, any clinging to the reality of Buddha-Bodies is self-liberated (*rang grol*).

A similar but somewhat more detailed explanation of this vision is found in the *ZMYT*²⁶⁹. In this text, two aspects concerning the attainment of the full measure of this vision are distinguished. Thus, the accomplishment of the Visions of Space (*dbyings snang*) implies the arising of luminous palaces

surrounded by five-coloured light. Inside them, the heaps of *maṇḍalas* of the Five Buddha-Families light up displaying themselves as the full measure of the visions of Intelligence (*rig snang*). Thus, the process of Intelligence ripening into Buddha-Bodies starts inside light-drops and *Vajra*-Chains with the arising of single Buddha-Bodies, and then continues with their lighting-up in pairs. Finally, the Five Buddha-Families together with their retinues pervade the whole space.

Klong chen rab 'byams distinguishes here three aspects of Intelligence, the first being the essentially pure Intelligence which holds onto the ground (*gzhi 'dzin pa'i rig pa*) and which is inseparably connected to the Intelligence having as definitive characteristic (*mtshan nyid 'dzin pa'i rig pa*) the Five Aspects of Pristine Cognition. Then, out of their self-radiation arises the Intelligence of superior vision (*lhag mthong gi rig pa*) in the form of *Vajra*-Chains. This self-radiation is called “naturally accomplished radiation”. Finally, Intelligence as radiation of all-pervading compassion manifests as the various objects arising in this vision.

The following part of this passage gives definitions of the individual syllables of the expression *rig pa tshad phebs kyi snang ba*. Thus, *Klong chen rab 'byams* says, that the reason for labeling these radiations as *rig pa* is the fact that Intelligence is the cause ripening itself into these radiations.

Outwardly (*phyi*), the full measure (*tshad*) is reached when outer appearances arise as Pristine Cognition. Inwardly (*nang*), it is realized when one's material body is liberated into Clear Light, and secretly (*gsang ba*), when Intelligence has ripened into the Five Buddha-Families.

That one does not need anymore to meditate during the

concluding phase of this vision is symbolized by the double-syllable *phebs pa*.

Seeing the pure realms of the *sambhogakāya* is represented by the double-syllable *snang ba*. It refers to the pure perception of the visions of the ground (*gzhi snang*) that effectuates the neutralization (*log pa*) of delusory visions. Similar to the full moon, the visions have reached here their full measure.

Klong chen rab 'byams finishes his discussion of this vision with a threefold analysis of the term “appearance” or “vision” (*snang ba*) understood as emanating out of Intelligence.

Thus, the term “visions of the ground” (*gzhi snang*) refers to that radiation of Intelligence which is not recognized by oneself as one’s own essence making itself felt in Outer Space. The term “visions of the way” (*lam snang*) basically denotes the same radiation. However, it is different from the former in the sense that it implies a recognition of the arising of the ground. The resultant visions (*'bras snang*) manifest in benevolent forms of the *sambhogakāya* and the *nirmanakāya* after the final ceasing of the visions of the way as exemplified by the Four Visions (*snang ba bzhi*).

- *The Vision of Exhaustion of Reality Itself*
(*chos nyid zad pa'i snang ba*):

As for the last of these Four Visions, i.e, the Vision of Exhaustion of Reality Itself (*chos nyid zad pa'i snang ba*):
According to the *KDYT*²⁷⁰, this vision is defined as the

absence of any conception as regards what is vision or not
(*snang ba dang mi snang du 'dzin pa*).

Klong chen rab 'byams then quotes the Tantra *Sgra thal 'gyur* saying that this vision is empty of visual signs. Thus, one attains Buddhahood in the sphere of the body of light (*'od lus*), because one's material body and one's sense-objects have ceased to be, one's delusory thoughts are naturally liberated, and one's speech is cut off. Moreover, lights wrapping up one's fingers mark one's final separation from any notion concerning samsara or nirvana, i.e., whatever manifests can not be truly established as having any essence. And even though there is such a change as far as the unfolding of visions are concerned, Intelligence itself remains the same, because it is said to be *per se* beyond increasing and diminishing. At this time, the absence of hostile effects stemming from detrimental actions of the Four Elementary Forces, the trackless disappearance of the continuity of recollection, the non-existence of sun and moon, the absence of the Six Kinds of Sentient Beings (*'gro ba rigs drug*), and the cessation of delusory appearances mark the full measure of realizing Intelligence. The impossibility of determining anything results from the natural disappearance of visions and is called "meeting the naturally pure *dharmakāya* on the level where everything has ceased to be" (*chos sku rang dag chos thams cad zad sar thug pa zhes bya*). Thus, one's Intelligence (*rang rig*) cannot be established to have a certain size or to be good or bad. Nevertheless, it is not non-existent, but presents itself as mere non-interfering clarity (*gsal ba tsam*) inherent in the compassionate aspect of the ground.

One's capacity (*mngon shes*) is unimpeded, thoughts

naturally disappear, and, without manifesting anymore one's impure body (*phung po*), one realizes the Body of Great Transference (*'pho ba chen po'i sku*). Specifically, whatever has appeared up to now naturally dissolves when one is looking at the lights wrapping up one's fingers. Afterwards, the appearances of sentient beings and also one's own body are perceived like a dream or like a reflection of the moon in the water. Moreover, the Body of Great Transference which has been realized by masters such as Padmasambhava or Vimalamitra is said to be a *Vajra-Body* (*rdo rje'i sku*) in the sense that it is beyond birth and death.

Related to this body are two kinds of attainment (*thob pa gnyis*). They are not mentioned in the the passage of the *KDYT* treating this vision, but the *TDZ* offers the necessary information about it²⁷¹. Thus, the term “power over birth” (*skye ba la dbang thob pa*) denotes one's power to manifest whatever body is necessary in order to liberate sentient beings, and the so called “power over entrance” (*'jug pa la dbang thob pa*) refers to one's power to enter into the ever present primordial purity (*gdod ma'i ka dag*) through dissolving the bodily form one takes whenever it is needed out of altruistic reasons.

Specified as its valuable property (*yon tan*) is the dissolution of one's body which is constituted from the Four Elementary Forces, and the fault (*skyon*) relating to it is defined as the lack of such a dissolution.

From among the two aims or benefits (*dgos*) of this vision, the temporary one refers to one's power to definitely draw the line between samsara and nirvana, and the final one implies

Buddhahood without leaving behind any remainder (*lhag med du 'tshang rgya ba*).

In the *ZMYT*²⁷², the Vision of Exhaustion of Reality Itself (*chos nyid zad pa'i snang ba*) is compared with the second moon-phase which begins with the first day of the waning moon and ends with the new moon. Thus, one attains Buddhahood in the unborn space into which all meditative signs (*rtags*) of the preceding three visions have dissolved. The return of the self-radiation into this Inner Space is also called “exhaustion of meditative signs” and is said to resemble the outer light of a crystal dissolving into it.

From among the two modes of exhaustion (*zad lugs gnyis*), the first is gradual and only achieved after strenuous practice. The second is immediate due to practice done during former lives or due to the blessing of one's teacher and is even accomplished without fully experiencing the meditative signs of the preceding three visions.

- *Texts treating the Four Visions:*

It certainly comes not as a surprise that all the texts containing information about the Four Visions (*snang ba bzhi*) seem to belong to the Instruction Series (*man ngag sde*), there being no texts of the Mind Series (*sems sde*) or the Space Series (*klong sde*) which treat this subject. Not only that, most of them belong to the category of *gter ma*. Apart from the texts already mentioned in this chapter, one finds several other ones in the *Sying thig ya bzhi* collection explaining this subject.

Thus, fairly detailed accounts of the Four Visions can be found in the *Btags grol don khrid* and the *Khrid rgyab lung gi phreng ba* of the *KDNYT*, and the texts relevant to this subject contained in the *KDYT* are the *Khrid yig nor bu lugs*, the *Khrid yig rin po che gser gyi phreng ba*, the *Tshig don rin po che'i bang mdzod*, and the *Nges don snying po*.

Apart from several short commentaries on the Four Visions extant in texts such as the *Yang snying 'phrul gyi dum bu*, the *Man ngag dum dum khrigs dum bu bdun cu rtsa bzhi pa ldeb*, the *Rin po che rlung gi pra khrid skor yig can ldeb*, and the *Sangs rgyas kyi 'das rjes gsum*, the major commentary on them to be found in the texts of the *BMNYT* certainly is the one contained in the *Rin po che rlung gi pra khrid skor phra yig can ldeb*.

In the *BMYT* are several relevant texts such as the *Dngos gzhi 'od gsal snying po'i don khrid*, the *Thod rgal rgyab yig*, and, in particular, the *Gzhi snang ye shes sgron me*.

As for the *ZMYT*, special attention has to be paid to the *Khrid yig sangs rgyas mnyams sbyor*.

Certainly, one finds quite a lot of allusions to the Four Visions (*snang ba bzhi*) in the Tantras and *gter ma* presented in the *TTT*, but passages explicitly treating them are rather rare. Thus, no such information about them is available in the *TTT* 54, and as for the *TTT* 55, the situation presents itself quite similarly. Here, merely two *gter ma* texts, i.e., the *Chos thams cad kyi don bstan pa* (= *Gyud chen dri med zla shel*), and the *Theg pa kun gyi spyi phud klong chen rab 'byams kyi rgyud* (= *Chos thams cad kyi don bstan pa rdzogs chen thig le nyag gcig ye nas bya btsal bral ba*) - both seem to represent texts of the Instruction Series - deal with them. Not only that,

the important passages as far as these visions are concerned, are almost identical in these two texts²⁷³. Again, not much different are the facts of the matter in the *TTT* 56. Apart from the passage of the *Sgra thal 'gyur* translated above, one rather discovers allusions to them, as for instance in the *Seng ge rtsal rdzogs*, in the *Kun tu bzang po klong drug pa*, or, in the *Klong gsal*, but no explicit explanation of their fourfold graduation.

Thus, one can draw the conclusion that the subject of the Four Visions (*snang ba bzhi*) is mainly treated in the *gter ma* texts of the Instruction Series (*man ngag sde*), although material dealing in general with visions arising during the practice of *thod rgal* abound especially in the *Rdzogs chen* Tantras of the *TTT* 56.

The Ninth Theme

The marks of progress in practice

“Now, the marks of progress in practice will be shown:

The mark of progress of mind is its fearlessness even in experiencing the sufferings of the hot and cold hells.

That is, one realizes that it is impossible to establish the sufferings of the hells as existing in Intelligence, because it never has experienced delusion.

There is no hoping for the transcendence of pain (nirvana).

That is, on account of one’s mind being (already) present as Buddhahood (*sangs rgyas*), it has not to be sought for elsewhere.

One does not create joy about Buddhahood.

That is, one has realized that there is no reason to attain Buddhahood again, because Intelligence has been Buddhahood from the very beginning.

As for the marks of progress of body and speech: The body (feels) like the full stomach of a dull person.

The speech manifests as unrelated talk, there being no sense at all, and the mind stays where it is focused on, etc.

As for the mark of progress of the self-appearance of Intelligence: Pure appearances (*dag snang*) arise after the ceasing of the outer delusory appearances (*‘khrul snang*), and the mark of progress of secret

Intelligence is to know (this) self-appearance as self-arising and self-liberating (*rang snang rang shar rang grol*).”

Three marks of progress (*nyams su blang ba'i tshad*) relating to body, speech, and mind, to the self-appearance of Intelligence, and to the secret Intelligence are distinguished. As mentioned in the text, the last two marks (*tshad*) refer to the fully manifest pure appearance or vision of Intelligence and to the recognition of this self-appearance as arising out of it and liberating into it.

In other works such as the *KDYT*²⁷⁴, the mark or peak-experience (*rtags tshad la phebs*) of body, speech, and mind is explicitly related to the Four Visions (*snang ba bzhi*):

1. With regard to the Vision of the Immediate Perception of Reality Itself (*chos nyid mngon sum gyi snang ba*) the peak-experience of one's body (*lus kyi rtags tshad la phebs*) is its immutable posture. A tortoise which has drawn back in its shell after one has it put on a plate is the example for its immutability. One's speech turns into the speech of a mute, there being no desire to speak, and, analogous to a bird caught in a trap which is unable to fly away, even when wishing to do so, one's mind is naturally focused on itself even when thoughts are arising.

2. During the peak-experience of one's body at the time of the Vision of Increasing Experiences (*nyams gong 'phel gyi snang ba*), one's body feels like the body of someone tormented by sickness, there being no longer any

consideration for its cleanliness and beauty. One's speech gushes forth like the speech of a madman, and, similar to someone afflicted with a lethal poisonous extract who knows that his death is certain, one is sure that one's mind will no longer return to samsaric realms.

3. During the Vision of the Intelligence Reaching Its Peak (*rig pa tshad phebs kyi snang ba*) the peak-experience of one's body is illustrated with the picture of an elephant sinking into mud. Similar to an elephant who can emerge instantly from the mud, one's body can go through whatever is made up of the Five Elementary Forces without getting stuck in it. Whatever one says is attended to by others and considered as meaningful, because one's speech is pleasing like a song sung by a *grul bum* child²⁷⁵. The confidence of one's mind that there is no longer any base for coming back to the Three Realms (*kham s gsum*) is illustrated with the picture of a person who knows that the smallpox will not arise again after having recovered from it.

4. Since one's body is like a corpse during the Vision of Exhaustion of Reality Itself (*chos nyid zad pa'i snang ba*), one is completely free of any fear or anxiety even when being threatened by a hundred executioners. One's speech is similar to an echo. Whatever others may say, one merely repeats it, because one has no longer any intention to communicate whatsoever. Finally, at the very moment of the disappearance of one's mind which is like mist vanishing into the atmosphere, one attains Buddhahood without leaving behind one's concrete body.

The Tenth Theme

The Intermediate State of Reality Itself arising in the time following death after having failed to practise during life

“Now comes the explanation of the mode of liberation in the Intermediate State of Reality Itself pertaining to the type of practitioner who has (received) the precepts of the teacher, but who due to laziness did not have the opportunity to master them.

From among the classification of the intermediate states, their nature, their limit (*sa mtshams*), and the way of their appearance (*snang lugs*), the classification is fourfold:

There are the Natural Intermediate State of Living (*rang bzhin gnas pa'i bar do*), the Intermediate State of Dying (*chi ka'i bar do*), the Intermediate State of Reality Itself (*chos nyid kyi bar do*), and the Intermediate State of Becoming (*srid pa'i bar do*).

As to their nature: The nature of the Natural Intermediate State of Living is the ceasing of the appearances of Buddha-Bodies on account of their being fettered by the Five Psycho-Physical Aggregates.

As for the nature of the Intermediate State of Dying: On account of the agitation of the Elementary Forces of the body, one experiences the sufferings of the body (as) outer (aspect of its nature).

(As) inner (aspect of its nature) one experiences the sufferings of the mind after the destruction of the medium of the mental impressions (*sems byung tshor gyi lam*).

And because the defect concerning (one's understanding of) the non-existence of attachment makes itself felt suddenly (*mtshangs rdol*) one suffers under the fear of being separated from one's base which is one's link with a body.

That is, one remains in fearful thoughts (*'du shes*) about dying.

As for the nature of the Intermediate State of Reality Itself: Having left the (defiled) aggregate which is the base of an attachment to a self, the meaning of Buddha-Bodies and Pristine Cognition appears in actuality.

Having cut off the connection with karma and karmic propensities, one enacts the meditative stability naturally.

On account of the (recognition of) the emptiness of the objects which are grasped as real, one enacts the Reality of utterly pure self-appearance.

As for the nature of the Intermediate State of Becoming: The projective existence of its body (*lus kyi srid pa*) (possesses) a mental subject (*yid kyi yul can*), and all its sense organs are unimpaired and free of any obstruction (*thogs med ldan*).

Mind (as its inner aspect) craves for the various things (of the Intermediate State of) Becoming and thinks about them.

On account of this aggregation of body and mind (*'dus pa*), one moves (in the Intermediate State of) Becoming without obstruction, and one thinks about and becomes involved with all (that one encounters).

As for the way of their appearance: In the case of the Natural Intermediate State of Living there are various ways of appearance manifesting, such as the specific appearances (*dgos btsan*) and the appearances of general characteristics (*spyi tshan*) of the Three Realms.

As for (specific appearances): Having contracted a disease (causing) yellow eyes (*mig gser gyi nad*), one perceives a (white) conch as yellow.

(Likewise), having contracted the disease caused by the aggregation (of the three humours) (*'dus pa'i nad*)²⁷⁶, (one perceives appearances) such as houses and their surroundings.

The (appearances of) general characteristics manifest to the Six Kinds of Beings as seventeen appearances (*snang ba bcu bdun*) (exemplified by) the appearance of water as nectar²⁷⁷.

As for the way of appearance of the Intermediate State of Dying: One is full of resentment and one's consciousness is drawn in.

That is, one is not (able) to renounce (the appearances of the present life), and what manifests is vague and unreliable (*za zi yam yam*).

As for the way of appearance of the Intermediate State of Reality Itself: One is full of resentment (*zhes 'tshig*), there being appearances of sounds and

forms, of Buddha-Bodies and Pristine Cognition.

As for the way of appearance of the Intermediate State of Becoming: (Here arise) the Five Elementary Forces (*'byung ba lnga'i snang tshul*), as flickering and fluctuating appearances.

As for the limit (*sa mtshams*) (of the intermediate states):

The Natural Intermediate State of Living (lasts) from entering one's mother's womb until meeting the circumstances causing death.

Then, up to the point of the ceasing of (the outer) breathing (which is marked by) a humming sound, (lasts) the Intermediate State of Dying.

Then, what arises onwards from the ceasing of the inner breathing (*nang dbugs*)²⁷⁸ up to (the phase of) Spontaneous Perfection (*lhun grub*) (is) the Intermediate State of Reality Itself (*chos nyid kyi bar do*), and what extends from there up to the city of the womb (*mngal gyi grong khyer*) pertains to the Intermediate State of Becoming.

As to the precepts of these four (intermediate states): In the Natural Intermediate State of Living, the (different) categories of knowables have to be ascertained.

First, one's mind has to be purified through studying.

Afterwards, one has to ascertain (what one has studied) through thinking, and finally, one has to pass beyond conceptions (*la zla ba*) through meditating.

Having purified one's mind by means of these three (aspects), the class of outer knowables is definitely understood (*thag chod pa*).

That is, one knows that appearances resemble a mirage or a dream.

Thus, one is compelled to turn away one's mind (*blo ldog pa*) from samsara.

Having definitely understood the category pertaining to the mind which is contained within (*nang 'du ba'i sems la gras thag chod pa*), one realizes one's own mind to be insubstantial (*dngos med*) and unidentifiable (*ngos gzung dang bral ba*), and consequently, one attains Buddhahood.

Having attained the result, that is, Buddhahood in its inseparability of the Three Buddha Bodies (*sku gsum*) on account of one's definite understanding of the category of knowables pertaining to the non-duality of appearances and mind (*snang sems gnyis med*), (one's) charismatic activities (*mdzad pa'i 'phrin las*) arise without restriction (*phyogs med du*).

Furthermore, it is important to meet a teacher which holds the correct (*mtshan nyid*) view.

In the Intermediate State of Dying, what is not clear has to be made clear.

That is, one has to plant the stake (of confidence) with regard to the quintessential instructions in the manner of an attractive maiden (*sgeg mo*) looking into the mirror.

Furthermore, a yogin having contracted a disease (provoked) by (bad) circumstances, examines the twenty-one marks of death (*'chi rtags nyer gcig*)²⁷⁹ and subsequently performs the rite of driving back (death) (*bzlog pa'i cho ga*) again and again.

When the mark of unsuccessful driving back has arisen,
(one has to reason that), originally, the body was
established by means of the Four Elementary Forces
and that finally, one's life is terminated on account of
the disintegration (*byer zug*) of the Four Elementary
Forces.

Furthermore, at the time of the earth dissolving into
earth (*sa sa la thim pa*), one's body feels heavy and
one is unable to raise it.

As the mark of the dissolution of the water into water,
one emits water from one's mouth and nose before
they dry up (completely).

As the mark of the dissolution of the fire into fire, the
heat of arms and legs, that is of the four extremities,
slips away.

At this time, brightness (*bkrag*) and radiance (*gzi
mdangs*) of the body are also lost.

Afterwards, at the time of the dissolution of the wind into
wind, one gasps for breath (*dbugs brtsegs ma
'byung*) and the strength of one's body is lost.

At this time, one has to bring to mind (*gsal gdab pa*)
the instructions (*gdams gnag*).

That is, now one has to remind oneself (of the
instructions saying) that the appearances occurring to
oneself in the Intermediate State of Reality Itself are
to be recognized as appearances projected by
oneself (*rang gi snang ba*).

Relying on that will be sufficient.

If (these instructions cannot be) made clear in this
way, it is appropriate to have present one's teacher.

After having accumulated all suitable kinds of branches of merit (*tshogs bsags pa*), the teacher has to remind the sick person three times after having placed a (small) bamboo cane or a scroll of paper (*shog gu'i dbyibs*) (at the entrance of) his left ear. Having done so, it is impossible not to arrive at (the recognition of) the Intermediate State of Reality Itself.

For example, a stable person whom one has advised (where to go) (*than brda bas*) certainly will meet with what he was told.

Likewise, one will certainly find (what the teacher has told one) in the Intermediate State of Reality Itself.

When one's teacher is not present, the instructions have to be given by one of one's own Vajra brothers and sisters (*rdo rje spun sring*) who keeps the Commitments pure (*sel med*) and whose view and action are in conformity with (the teaching).

When the sick person's stability (*brten pa*) deteriorates (*nyams pa*) and his (outer) breathing ceases, his winds have to be purified (*rlung sbyang*) and the pith of mending his body and speech (has to be applied):

The three doors (*sgo gsum*) of the sick person and of oneself have to be brought together, and after having pushed out one's own air, one has to let it dissolve three times into the (three doors of the sick person).

Having done so, his body is completely filled with warmth.

Then, by uttering "HUNG", one induces (the air) from one's mouth (into the mouth of the sick person).

Uttering “OM”, one induces it to his right nostril, and

saying “A”, one induces it to his left nostril.

Having done so, his eyes protrude completely.

When this has happened, it is certain that the sick

person will arrive (at the Intermediate State of Reality

Itself) by giving (him) the instructions as before.

Then, on account of the wind dissolving into

consciousness, the cognitive capacity (*shes pa*)

vanishes.

Afterwards, at the time of the cessation of the inner

breathing, there is the Dissolution of the

Consciousness Into the Sky (*rnam shes nam mkhar*

thim pa'i tshe) and the ties of body and mind are

(definitely) cut off.

That is, when the breathing has vanished into space

(*bar snang*), the concrete body (*lus gdos pa can*)

completely turns into lifeless matter (*bem po*).

When the Intelligence passes into the Intermediate

State of Reality Itself like a fading spark, one speaks

of “the Dissolution of the Sky Into the Clear Light”

(*nam mkha' 'od gsal la thim pa*).

Outer (things such as) earth, stones, mountains and

rocks have (now) ceased (and) the appearances of

Reality Itself (which is) the inner Clear Light, arise.

Due to that all appearances are five-coloured.

One thinks that (these) appearances arise such that

they give way when stepping down and that they raise

back when lifting (one's foot again) (*mnan na nem pa*

snyam pa bdeg na 'phar ba'i snyam pa).

The (Three Kinds of) Piths to be applied at this time²⁸⁰
are the pith (of) placing the consciousness (*'jug pa shes pa'i gnad*), the pith of the liberation (of) the body (*grol ba lus kyi gnad*), and the pith (of) final recognition (*mthar phyin pa ngo shes pa'i gnad*).

The pith (of) placing the consciousness has two (aspects): Placing the light into Intelligence and placing Intelligence into the light²⁸¹.

As for placing Intelligence into the light: The appearances of light (*'od snang*) are the appearances of the sets of the Five Buddha-Bodies (*sku lnga lnga'i snang ba*).

That is, from their heart an exceedingly subtle light resembling bundled light rays, each of them penetrating one's heart, arises.

At this time, one stays in natural meditative stability (*rang bzhin gyi bsam gtan*).

As to the mode of liberation (*grol ba'i lugs*): At this time, the body has been liberated into a body of light (*'od sku*)²⁸², because the attachment to a self (*bdag tu 'dzin pa*) with regard to the Five Psycho-Physical Aggregates has vanished by itself.

Staying in the pure Reality Itself, the concrete (body) (*gdos bcas*) (formed) by the subtle and gross Elementary Forces (*'byung ba phra rags*) has been liberated, (that is), it is freed in the great bliss (of) Clear Light (*'od gsal bde ba chen por grol*).

Intelligence itself has been freed (into the Clear Light) like mother and child mingling together (*ma la bu thim*), because it has been liberated from the subtle

and gross afflictions (*nyon mongs phra rags*).

At the time of final (recognition) (*mthar phyin pa'i dus na*), the Three Piths of Confidence (*yid ches pa'i gnad gsum*) arise²⁸³.

Remembering the confidence which is like placing a child into the lap of the mother, (one recognizes the Clear Light in the same way as) one recognizes a former acquaintance by merely seeing him.

That is, one's misconceptions being cleared (*sgro 'dogs gcod pa*), one recognizes (everything) as self-appearance.

As to the remembering of the instruction of immutability (*mi 'gyur ba*) which is like a golden surgical needle (*gser gyi thur ma*): (Without wavering), a skillful surgeon opens a way with a surgical needle in the case of a man into whom the "heart-wind" (*snying rlung*) has entered²⁸⁴.

Likewise, having immutable confidence in the pure way of pure Reality Itself, meditative absorption arises.

Furthermore, the Combination of the Four Pristine Cognitions (*ye shes bzhi sbyor*) arises at this time at the level of one's heart²⁸⁵.

First come the white banners of the white light.

Above them are stacked successively yellow, red, and blue banners.

Above them, the drops of light - resembling mirrors facing down (*me long kha sbubs lta bu*) - arise in triple and quintuple stacks.

This (all) is called "the Interior Way of *Vajrasattva*" (*rdo rje sems dpa'i khong gseng gi lam*).

Afterwards, as to the remembering which is like the
arrow of an athlete that is never coming back: An
arrow (shot) with strong force pierces everything.

Likewise, Intelligence Itself dissolves into the Body of
Precious Spontaneous Perfection (*rig pa nyid lhun
grub rin po che'i lus la thim pa'i tshe*)²⁸⁶.

In the first moment, the Thirty-Six Aspects of Capacity
(*mngon shes pa drug phrag drug*)²⁸⁷ arise.

In a second one, the principal deities and the retinue
(*rigs lnga'i gtso 'khor*) of the Five Buddha-Families
manifest clearly in (five-coloured) heaps in the
direction straight forward (*thad kar*).

Below are the birth places of the Six Kinds of Beings
(*rigs drug*) together with their karma, their suffering,
their life span, etc.

Above are clearly manifest many (different) modes of
being.

They come out of the Six Aspects of Recollection (*rjes
su dran pa drug*)²⁸⁸.

In a third moment, the appearances of Buddha-Bodies
and Pristine Cognition arise.

Knowing them to be self-appearances, one gets
certainty in the precious spontaneous perfection, and
therefore, the following Eight Kinds of Dissolution
(*thim lugs brgyad*) arise simultaneously.

As to the dissolution of compassion into compassion:

The appearances of the Six Kinds of Beings are
drawn into themselves like the sun rays are drawn in
when the sun is setting.

There is not (even) the name of impure delusion (left),
because apparent forms (*gzugs snang*) have been
transcended.

As to the dissolution of light into light: Like a rainbow
disappearing into the sky, the light is no (longer)
differentiated as having the specific characteristics
(*mthsan ma'i ris med*) of colour.

Therefore, the light is (in the state of) One Taste (*ro
gcig*) in the Space which is empty and ungraspable.

The dissolution of the Buddha-Body into the Buddha-
Body resembles a Vase-Body (*bum pa'i sku*) in the
sense that the knowables (*shes bya*) are clearly
manifest in the interior (*nang du gsal ba*).

It is the completely pure self-appearance without there
being (any appearances) of Buddha-Families with
their specific characteristics (such as) face and arms.

The dissolution of Pristine Cognition into Pristine
Cognition is like placing a child into the lap of the
mother.

That is, Reality Itself, the mother, and Intelligence, the
son, are mingled together.

The dissolution of non-duality into non-duality is like
water dissolving into water, there being the
(universally) equal, undifferentiated essence (*ngo bo
mnyam pa ris med du gyur pa*).

The dissolution of the liberation from extremes²⁸⁹ into
the liberation from extremes is like space dissolving
into space in the sense that there are no appearing
objects.

The dissolution of the door of pure Pristine Cognition

into the essence is like the snow lion who has reached the snow (mountain), there being freedom from anxiety (*nyams dbag tsha*).

The dissolution of the impure samsaric door into the door of pure Pristine Cognition is like dismantling the ropes of a yak-hair tent, in the sense that (the samsaric door) is (collapsed and) is drawn into the singularity (*thig le nyag gcig*).

In the Tantra *Nyi zla kha sbyor* it is said that at this time, the qualities and charismatic activities of Buddhahood arise without measure (*dpag tu med pa*).

(As to) the a person who (only) has inferior (*tha ma*) diligence with respect to this (instruction): After having misconstrued (what has up to now appeared to) his sense faculties (*dbang po'i kha 'chal nas*), he (gets) out of the (only) partial appearance of the Intermediate State of Becoming and then finds relief in the pure realms (*zhing khams*) of the actual *nirmaṇakāya* and one therefore does not enter the city of the womb.

That is, having taken a miraculous birth (*brdzus te skyes nas*)²⁹⁰ in pure realms such as the pure eastern realm of *Mngon par dga' ba*, one enjoys (*longs spyod pa*) the teaching of the Great Vehicle during five hundred years.

Then, one will realize perfect Buddhahood (*yang dag par rdzogs par sangs rgya ba*) without there being (the experience of) the Intermediate State of Reality Itself.

Furthermore, in the eastern pure realm of *Mngon par*

dga' ba, one sees (*zhal mthong*) the
manifestation of the *Vajra-Buddha-Family*.

In the southern pure realm of *Dpal dang ldan pa*, the
manifestation of the Buddha-Family of Preciousness
(*rin chen rigs*) bestows empowerments.

In the western pure realm of *Padma brtsegs*, 'Od dpag
med, the manifestation of the Buddha-Family of
Lotus, gives his prophecy (*lung ston*), and in the
northern pure realm of *Las rab rdzogs pa Don grub*,
the manifestation of the Buddha-Family of
Accomplished Action, extinguishes the totality
(*mtha'*) of karma and karmic propensities.

After having been liberated there, one will attain
Buddhahood.

Commoners who do not see the door of this teaching
are confused (*kha 'chal*) about it on account of the
karma (of the Intermediate State of) Becoming.

Being thrown into the inferior karma of the Intermediate
State of Becoming (*srid pa'i bar do las mtha' bor
nas*), one has a mental body (*yid kyi lus can*) with
one's sense faculties completely intact.

With this body which is free from any obstruction, one
engages oneself and thinks about everything (that
appears) in a flickering and fluctuating way - like a
bird driven by the wind in the sky.

At this time, one does not see (one's own) body (in
its material form), it being like a dream body.

(Moreover, by beings having) a (material) body, (such a
mental) body is not seen.

Nonetheless, the (countless mental bodies) appear like

dust motes in a sunbeam (seen through) an opening.
As to the linking to karmic propensities (in order to)
continue the remainder of (good) karma which is like
joining a broken water canal with a channel (*yur ba
rkang chags pa la lba 'dzugs pa*): The ones who have
accumulated good karma are born in high realms
(*gnas mtho ba*) and the ones with bad (karma) take
their body in the three bad states of being (*ngan song
gsum*), etc.²⁹¹.

From among the twenty aspects of this intermediate
state of being to be shown, the first one (refers to) the
peculiarity of the body: No matter how much one stays
in (this) intermediate state, during the first half (one
retains) the former body and during the second half
(one takes) the future one.

Moreover, similar to a dream (body), this (body) is not
concrete, and (consists) not of flesh and blood.

Second, as to (the peculiarity of its) field of perception
(*skye mched*): It is a mental body difficult to
apprehend, free of any obstruction.

Third, as to the peculiarity of (its) light: For those with
pure karma, a white (light) illuminates (the space
surrounding them) up to a mile (*dpag tshad*). But for
those with impure karma, a pale light shines (only) up
to a fathom (*'dom gang*).

Fourth, as to the the peculiarity of (its) birth place (*skye
gnas*): From among the Four Birth Places (*skye
gnas bzhi*) it is the (one involving) miraculous birth.

Fifth, as to the peculiarity of the direction the head looks:
(The being with a mental body) imagines (the

appearances of), gods and men, (having their heads looking) upwards, of Anti-gods and animals (*byol song*) (looking) horizontally, and of hell beings (*myal ba*) and hungry ghosts (*yi dwags*) (looking) downwards.

Sixth, as to (the peculiarity of its) life-span: Having died after a period of seven days, one is (re)born for a second period (of seven days).

This (process repeats itself) during seven weeks.

Seventh, as to the peculiarity of (its) capacity: In a mere instant it sees (vast dimensions) such as one or two Three-Thousandfold Universes (*stong gsum*)²⁹².

Afterwards, this defiled capacity is declines on account of the strong power of karmic propensities.

Eighth, as to (the peculiarity of) the size of (its) body: Having the size of an eight or sixteen years old child, it looks at everything and likes to get involved with everything.

Ninth, as to (the peculiarity of its) way of acting (*spyod lam*): After the decline of the power of truth of Reality Itself (*chos nyid bden pa'i stobs*), one takes hold of former karmic propensities.

On account of that, one is preoccupied with (things) one was attached to before.

Tenth, as to the peculiarity of (its) "name" (*ming gi khyad par*): Out of the karmic propensities of the seeds of the Four Elementary Forces (*'byung ba bzhi'i sa bon gyi bag chags*), the former body arises as the (seemingly) material body of the Intermediate State of Becoming (*srid pa'i sha gzugs can*).

Eleventh, as to the peculiarity of (its) miraculous transformations: (Its) sense faculties (*dbang po*) are perfectly bright, and (its) limbs are complete and (seemingly) coarse.

(Its) consciousness takes hold of whatever it is focused on, and without any obstruction at all, it pierces anything it thinks about.

Twelfth, as to the peculiarity of accumulating or not accumulating (its specific) karma: On account of the strong power of former white and black karma, one accumulates also in this (intermediate state) all future karma in accordance with the (former one).

Thirteenth, as to the peculiarity of (its) colour (of light):

When one is born as god or man, it is white.

(In the case of) anti-gods and animals it is yellow, and for hungry ghosts and hell beings black (appears).

Fourteenth, as to (its) definition: It is called “*bar*”, because it is in between the appearances of the *sambhogakāya* and the Six Kinds of Beings.

“*Ma*” means that on account of not knowing the power of truth of what (really) is (*gang nyid kyi bden pa*), future projective existence evolves from it.

It is called “*do*”, because ignorance is present between these two (appearances).

Fifteenth, as to the peculiarity of its wholesome and negative actions (*dge sdig*): A consciousness which has done formerly wholesome actions is bright (*gsal ba*).

But (a consciousness) which has done negative actions is not bright; (it is) dull.

Sixteenth, as to which of the Three Realms it belongs: It belongs to the Formless Realm (*gzugs med khams*).

Seventeenth, as to the connection with the future body:

At the time of completing the karma of the intermediate state, one enters a womb as place of refuge.

As to the indications (*rtags*) of having penetrated (it):

If one thinks that one is on the top of a temple or inside an upper storey of a mansion, (one will be reborn) as god.

If (one thinks that one sees an appearance which) is like a revolving fire-brand circle (*mgal me bskor ba ltar*), (one will reborn) as anti-god.

If one thinks that one is a villager, (one will be reborn) as ordinary human being (*mi lus tsam po*).

If one stays inside a dense fog, (one will reborn) as pure human being (*mi lus gtsang ma*).

If one thinks that one is staying among many people, (one will reborn) as precious human being (*mi lus rin po che*).

If one is thinking that one is staying within a shelter for birds or within thick, gently drifting mist (*na bun lang ling*), (one will be reborn) as animal.

If one thinks that one is staying in (places) such as ravines or shielding caves, (one will be reborn) as hungry ghost.

(If one will be reborn in) the hell, one does not stay in the Intermediate State of Becoming.

Eighteenth, as to the elucidation of the connection between the future body and afflictions: On account of

the formation of hatred (*zhe sdang*) in this (Natural Intermediate State of Living) one will be reborn in the Form Realm (*gzugs khams*).

On account of desire (*'dod chags*) one will be reborn in the Realm of Desire (*'dod khams*).

On account of stupidity (*gti mug*) one will be reborn in the Formless Realm (*gzugs med khams*)²⁹³.

Nineteenth, as to (its) mode of transmigration: Similar to a chariot's wheel or a water wheel, one goes from one to another (existence among) the Six Kinds of Beings.

Twentieth, as to (its) illustration by means of an example: The impetus of (its) karma is like a string of a bow.

Grasping (at it) is like a magnet (having the power of attracting it).

By the power of karmic propensities (related) to these (realms), one holds one's mind onto a womb.

Afterwards, by the power of karma, one will be reborn in places associated with joy, strife, equality (*cha mnyam*), flight, and great suffering.

Moreover, the body of the Intermediate State of Becoming is to be taken as an illusory body of (one's own) tutelary deity.

(These) are very essential instructions (about the intermediate state).

By means of them, the definite characteristics of the intermediate state together with supplementary points have been explained."

According to the general *Syning thig* teachings, the superior person realizes Buddhahood in the Natural Intermediate State of Living (*rang bzhin gnas pa'i bar do*) or in the Intermediate State of Dying (*chi ka'i bar do*), the mediocre one liberates himself in the Intermediate State of Reality Itself (*chos nyid kyi bar do*), and the inferior one has to experience the beginning of the Intermediate State of Becoming (*srid pa'i bar do*) before finding relief in the pure realms of the Actual *nirmaṇakāya* (*rang bzhin sprul sku'i zhing*).

With regard to the text being focused on the practice of *thod rgal*, the most important intermediate state after one's death is the Intermediate State of Reality Itself (*chos nyid kyi bar do*) on account of its close relation to one of the Six Lamps (*sgron ma drug*) and to the Four Visions (*snang ba bzhi*).

As has been explained in the Sixth Theme, the Lamp of the Time of the Intermediate State (*bar do dus kyi sgron ma*) is identical with this intermediate state. Not only that, the Four Visions (*snang ba bzhi*) too, are very closely connected to it in the sense that what lights up during the practice of *thod rgal* done while one is still alive, represents the same pure self-appearances (*rang snang dag pa*) that arise after one's death²⁹⁴. Moreover, the necessity of getting accustomed to the Clear Light (*'od gsal*) during one's life is emphasized in the *TDZ*²⁹⁵, because the Clear Light uncovered during this phase through stabilizing one's Intelligence will be recognized in the Intermediate State of Reality in the same way as an old acquaintance is recognized.

According to another analogy, the Great Clear Light of the Intelligence of the Ground is said to be the mother (*gzhi rig pa'i 'od gsal chen po ma*) having a son which is the Clear

Light of the Four Visions (*snang ba bzhi'i 'od gsal bu*).

Thus, when one dwells in one's understanding of one's own Intelligence (*rang rig*) during the appearance coming out of the Motherly Reality Itself (*chos nyid ma'i snang ba*), this very appearance is immediately recognized as self-appearance, i.e., as son, and it naturally dissolves into its initially pure place of liberation (*ka dag gi grol sa*) which again is the mother.

Moreover, the mother-like Clear Light of the initially pure ground of one's present Intelligence (*da lta'i rig pa ka dag gzhi'i 'od gsal ma lta bu*) is realized by means of Cutting Through (*khregs chod*), whereas the son-like Pristine Cognition of the Four Visions arising out of the ground is understood with the help of Leaping Over (*thod rgal*).

During the Intermediate State of Reality Itself, the place of liberation which is the natural place of initial purity (*ka dag gi rang sa*) is like a mother's lap and the naturally arising appearances of the Five Lights (*'od lnga*) are her son.

The last example mentioned in this passage of the *TDZ* likens the dissolution into the ground with the son jumping into the mother's lap (*ma pang du bu 'jug pa lta bu*). The joy arising in the very moment of the mutual recognition of mother and son is said to be similar to the attainment of the bliss of the Buddhas caused by one's liberation in the arising of the natural meditative stability after one has realized (in this stability) the difference (between ignorance and Intelligence).

With regard to the different phases of dissolution during the Intermediate State of Reality Itself mentioned in the text, some further light can be shed when consulting the *BMYT*, where Five Phases of Dissolution (*thim lugs lnga*) are distinguished

which however, should not be confused with the Eight Kinds of Dissolution (*thim lugs brgyad*) mentioned in the text²⁹⁶.

1. Thus, at the time of the Dissolution of the Consciousness Into the Sky (*rnam shes nam mkhar thim pa'i tshe*), Intelligence which stays in the middle of the heart projects itself by means of the light-channel into Outer Space. The very first moment of dwelling there, the primordially pure appearance (*ka dag gi snang ba*) arises like the immaculate dark-blue sky during autumn. When one knows it to be the primordial ground of liberation, one is freed from entering again into samsara.

2. Two phases or moments are distinguished at the time of the Dissolution of the Sky Into the Clear Light, (*nam mkha' 'od gsal la thim pa'i tshe*). First, when one identifies the Five Lights which arise like coloured threads or ladders, one is liberated in the mode of Upper Directness (*yar gyi zang thal*)²⁹⁷. Then, in a second moment, countless appearances of the Five Lights arise out of the light-rays of compassion in Space. When one recognizes at this time the *maṇḍala* of the Wrathful Ones (*khro bo*) with its sounds, lights, and rays as self-appearance, one's own Intelligence (*rang rig*) dissolves into the Buddha-Bodies of the Wrathful Ones, and one attains Buddhahood.

3. Following that is the Dissolution of the Clear Light Into the Union (*'od gsal zung 'jug la thim pa*). At this time, the heaps of the Five Buddha-Families (*rigs lnga*) arise simultaneously, but because one realizes the Five Aspects of

Discriminative Awareness (*shes rab lnga*)²⁹⁸ gradually, the connection between the heart of the Five Buddha-Families and one's own heart by means of light-rays arises in Five Days of Meditative Stability (*bsam gtan gyi zhag lnga*).

Thus, when one identifies the dark blue light of the first day as the Pristine Cognition of the Space of Reality (*chos kyi dbyings kyi ye shes*) as manifestation of one's own essence (*rang ngo shes pa*), one is liberated when one sees *Vairocana* (*Rnam par snang mdzad*) with his consort who is surrounded by the other four couples of the Five Buddha-Families.

On account of understanding the white light as Mirror-Like Pristine Cognition (*me long ye shes*), one liberates oneself into *Akṣobhya* (*Mi bskyod pa*) during the second day.

Simliary, the third day makes possible the liberation into *Ratnasambhāva* (*Rin chen 'byung ldan*) after having identified the yellow light as Pristine Cognition of Equality (*mnyam nyid ye shes*).

During the fourth one, one attains liberation into *Amitābha* (*Snang ba mtha' yas*) by one's identification of the red light with the Discriminating Pristine Cognition (*so sor rtog pa'i ye shes*).

The fifth one renders accessible one's liberation into *Amoghasiddhi* (*don yod grub pa*) after having realized the green light as the Swiftly Accomplishing Pristine Cognition (*bya ba nan tan gyi ye shes*).

At this time, i.e., during the Dissolution of the Clear Light Into the Union (*'od gsal zung 'jug la thim pa'i tshe*), the Three Piths (*gnad gsum*) have to be applied.

First, from among them, the pith (of) placing the

consciousness (*'jug pa shes pa'i gnad*) consists of placing light into Intelligence (*'od rig pa la 'jug pa*) and placing Intelligence into light (*rig pa 'od la 'jug pa*). The first one refers to the dissolution of the appearances of the Five Buddha-Families into one's heart, and the second one implies the vanishing of one's body into their heart. At this time, one stays in a natural meditative stabilization on account of having identified these appearances as self-appearances.

Second, the knowledge that one's dwelling in this natural meditative stabilization presents itself as body of the Pristine Cognition of the Clear Light is the pith of the liberation of the body (*grol ba lus kyi gnad*) into light.

Third, the liberation on account of staying in the very recognition of these appearances as self-appearances marks the pith of final recognition (*mthar phyin pa ngo shes pa'i gnad*).

In short, one's accomplishment of these Three Piths implies first one's identification of these appearances as self-appearances, second, one's dwelling in the very recognition of them as self-appearances, and third, one's liberation on account of one's dwelling in this recognition.

4. Afterwards, during the Dissolution of the Union Into Pristine Cognition (*zung 'jug ye shes la thim pa*), ie., during the fourth phase, the white, yellow, red, and blue banners (*snam bu*) of Pristine Cognition, which are stacked up successively, arise. They are said to symbolize four of the Five Aspects of Pristine Cognition (*ye shes lnga*)²⁹⁹.

Furthermore, as the *BMYT* mentions, the green banner does not arise, because the display of the Accomplishing Pristine

Cognition (*bya ba grub pa'i rtsal ma rdzogs pa*) has not yet been perfected during this phase. Thus, it is important to know the Three Piths of Liberation (*grol ba gsum gyi gnad*) in order to liberate oneself into the primordial ground: Being without a material body, one easily is liberated from the Four Elementary Forces, one's Intelligence being without stains, one is easily liberated from afflictions, and not knowing any inside or outside as to the Clear Light, one is easily liberated from dualistic fixation (*gzung 'dzin*).

5. The Dissolution of Pristine Cognition Into the Precious Spontaneous Perfection (*ye shes lhun grub rin po che la thim pa*) of the *BMYT*, i.e., the fifth dissolution, offers an explanation of the Eightfold Arisal (*shar lugs brgyad*)³⁰⁰ which is missing in the text. Apart from that, both versions of this dissolution do not differ substantially.

How the Four Lamps are related to these phases of dissolution and to the final result being the primordial ground of liberation (*gdod ma'i grol sa*), will be discussed in the Eleventh Theme.

The Eleventh Theme

The great liberation

“Thus, if one thinks (about themes like) the way of liberating oneself at the time of liberation from the intermediate state (*bar do*) or from this very (life), (or about) the way it will be at the time of Perfect Buddhahood (*yang dag par sang rgya ba*), (or about) the difference between former and future Buddhas, (it has to be said that) these (liberated beings) are without duality and free of differentiation.

On account of that, they dwell in the great self-perfection (of) the (universally) equal essence.

That is, because there are no differences at all, they dwell in the freedom of grasping (*'dzin med*) which is without restrictions (*phyogs bral*).

By analogy, (this state) is similar to Space dissolving into Space.

Furthermore, the pervading factor (*khyab byed*) which is like the Inner Space of a vase, is naturally present in (one's) mind.

The intermediate connecting tie which is like the (Intermediate) Space, is the conjunction (*mtshams sbyar*) of the Four Lamps, (and) the concept-free emptiness (of) the Space of Reality is like the Outer Space.

Furthermore, when the vase is broken, the Outer, Inner, and Intermediate Spaces are in inseparable union.

Likewise, Intelligence is mixed (with Space) and completed without (there being) anything outside or inside (*rig pa phyi nang med par*).

Furthermore, if one expresses a little bit in words (the meaning of) the result one makes use of the term “*dharmakāya*”, because (as result), one abides in the reality of the essence itself (*ngo bo nyid kyi chos*).

Because one enjoys undefiled great bliss (*zag med kyi bde ba chen po*) (the result) is termed “*sambhogakāya*”, and because one emanates all kinds of (activities) which are necessary to tame any being in any way (*gang la gang 'dul du*) it is termed “*nirṇāṇakāya*”.

Moreover, because they (are) not different (in their) essence, the Three Bodies (*sku gsum*) are present as One Taste (*ro gcig*).

(The fact that) they are ungraspable (in their) emptiness is termed “Reality Itself which is free from extremes” (*mtha' bral*).

(The fact) that) there is no differentiation as to their being this or not being this is termed ” total perfection of inseparable union” (*dbyer med yongs su rdzogs pa*).

(Their) Reality transcends (the notion that they are) observable aspects and objects.

On account of that, (their reality) is empty of the extreme of the subject-object structure.

(This fact) is termed “the totally perfect Buddha-Body which is free from any extreme”.

Moreover, (their) Reality is not created, has not arisen (out of something) and is independent (of anything).

(This fact) is also termed “great identity of undifferentiated equality”.

As for such a Buddhahood: In the condition (*gnas skabs*) of the *dharmakāya*, (its) Three Pristine Cognitions are complete in the ground.

Moreover, these (Three Pristine Cognitions), i.e., the Pristine Cognition of the initially pure essence, the Pristine Cognition of self-arisen effortless perfection (*rang byung lhun grub*), and the Pristine Cognition of all-pervading compassion (can) not be classified as having individually specific characteristics (*mtshan nyid ris can*).

In the condition of the *sambhogakāya*, the Five Pristine Cognitions which exhibit their individually specific characteristics manifest clearly.

Moreover, these (Pristine Cognitions), that is, the Pristine Cognition of Reality, the Mirror-Like Pristine Cognition, the Pristine Cognition of Equality, the Discriminating Pristine Cognition, and the Accomplishing Pristine Cognition have no subject-object (structure).

In the condition of the *nirmanakāya*, (Buddhahood) is present as the Two Pristine Cognitions of Knowledge (*mkhyen pa'i ye shes gnyis*).

That is, as Pristine Cognition of knowing the nature of things just as it is (*ji lta ba mkhyen pa'i ye shes*) and

as Pristine Cognition of seeing whatever there is

(*ji snyed pa gzigs pa'i ye shes*).

Moreover, these (Pristine Cognitions) are not something

(exhibiting the two aspects of) an actor and an action

(*bya byed*).

These Five Buddha-Bodies (*sku Inga*)³⁰¹ cannot be

expressed in words (*brjod las 'das pa*) and possess

an unfathomable number of qualities (*yon tan*) such

as the Ten Powers (*stobs bcu*), the Four Aspects of

Fearlessness (*mi 'jigs pa bzhi*), the (Four)

Immeasurables (*tshad med pa*), and the (Four)

Applications of Mindfulness (*dran pa nye bar gzhang*

pa)³⁰².

(Thus, the explanation of) “the Eleven Themes”, that is,

the Grand Mother of the “Precious Copper Letters”

(*rin po che zangs yi ge gyi phyi mo*) which is the king

of quintessential instructions³⁰³ and which belongs to

the (Tantra called) *Nyi ma snang byed* of the Total

Great Perfection of the Secret Unsurpassable

(Cycle)³⁰⁴, is completed.

Whatever virtue (*dge ba*) has been accumulated by

composing this (text), may it put the countless

sentient beings without exception in a state of seeing

the truth of Reality Itself in the self-appearing pure

Pristine Cognition!

(This is) the heart-juice of the learned master (*mkhas*

pa) Vimalamitra.

SA MA YA GUH YA RGYA RGYA RGYA

Through what has been written here by *Klong chen rab 'byams*, the glorious yogin of vast expanse who is free of activity (*byar med*), may all sentient beings cross the samsaric ocean and attain Buddhahood.

MANGA LAM”

As mentioned in the text, in the very moment of one's final liberation which resembles the dissolution of Space into Space, the vase-like body breaks up and the Inner Space of Intelligence enclosed in it mingles with the Outer Space through the medium of the Intermediate Space of the Four Lamps³⁰⁵.

Although there is ultimately no difference between Perfect Buddhahood (*yang dag par sangs rgyas pa*) and other forms of Buddhahood such as the Visibly Accomplished Buddhahood (*mngon par rdzogs par sangs rgyas pa*), the former is special in the sense that it is intimately linked to the concept of *lhag med* - “without remainder” - which is considered to be the final result of the practice of *thod rgal* manifesting in this very lifetime and which stands somewhat in contrast to the Visibly Accomplished Buddhahood. The latter is defined as *lhag bcas* - “with remainder” - and is obtained during the intermediate states after death. As for that, the following is written in the *KDY T*³⁰⁶:

“The liberation in the intermediate states (which is accompanied by) signs seen by everyone such as light, sound, (indestructible) relics, or earthquakes,

is (called) “Visibly Accomplished Enlightenment”.

Not visibly manifest is (Buddhahood) in the case of a dissolution into the body of light (*’od lus*), because no such signs are seen.

This is Perfect Buddhahood in the primordially pure ground, because there are no (bodily) remainders.

Moreover, not only the full measure of liberation in the Intermediate State (of Reality Itself) (which manifests after having left behind) (bodily) remainders is called “Visibly Accomplished Enlightenment”, (because this kind of Buddhahood) also includes the liberation into a Buddha-Realm of the *nirmaṇakāya*.

The liberation without (bodily) remainders (accomplished) in this very life is termed “Perfect Buddhahood” and is included in (what is called) “liberation in the ground of *Kun tu bzang po*.”

Moreover, the *KDYT*³⁰⁷ gives an interesting explanation of the result, i.e., the full measure of the liberation effectuated either in this very life or in the Intermediate State of Reality Itself (*chos nyid kyi bar do*)³⁰⁸ by means of the Four Lamps (*sgron ma bzhi*).

Thus, during the Dissolution of Sky Into the Clear Light (*nam mkha’ ’od gsal la thim pa*) - immediately before the Dissolution of Consciousness Into the Sky (*rnam shes nam kha’ la thim pa*) - the Lamp of the Water that Lassos Everything At a Distance is connected with Outer Space through continually abiding light-ropes. Thereafter, the whole world consisting of rough material appearances is pervaded by

appearances of the Clear Light brought about by the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space.

When one is able to identify them as self-appearances (*rang snang*), the Lamp of Self-Arisen Discriminative Awareness arises as complete liberation. The reason for that is, that its arising brings about the immediate dissolution of the light-drops of the Lamp of Empty Drops of Light into the inner clarity (*nang gsal*) of the ground.

Being unable to gain confidence in this phase, the Dissolution of the Clear Light Into the Union (*'od gsal zung 'jug la thim pa*) manifests. At this time the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space has the size of the Three Thousand Worlds (*stong gsum*) and the Wrathful and Peaceful Buddhas (*zhi khro*) appear inside the Lamp of Empty Drops. The connection between one's heart and the heart of the Buddhas is established by means of light-rays arising during the Five Days of Meditative Stability (*bsam gtan gyi zhag lnga*) of this dissolution. On account of staying in this meditative stability, the Lamp of Self-Arisen Discriminative Awareness arises by means of which one has the chance to realize oneself in the appearances of this dissolution.

Again, there is a further chance of liberation during the next phase called "Dissolution of the Union Into Pristine Cognition" (*zung 'jug ye shes la thim pa*)³⁰⁹. That is, when the Lamp of Empty Drops of Light becomes visible as light-drops inside the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space, one liberates oneself through acquaintance with the detached Self-Liberation of the self-clarity of the Lamp of Self-Arisen Discriminative Awareness

presenting itself as fourfold union of Pristine Cognition
(*ye shes bzhi sbyor*).

Immediately afterwards arises the phase called “Dissolution
of Pristine Cognition Into the Precious Spontaneous
Perfection” (*ye shes lhun grub rin po che la thim pa*) during
which the Lamp of Utterly Pure Space lights up as Space full of
light and the Lamp of Empty Drops of Light shelters the Bodies
of numerous Buddha-Deities.

On account of the arising of the Lamp of Self-Arisen
Discriminative Awareness which knows that these visions are
self-appearances, one masters the Precious Spontaneous
Perfection and attains liberation in the primordial ground
through the simultaneous arising of the Eight Kinds of
Dissolution (*thim lugs brgyad*)³¹⁰.

As for the Four Lamps, they do not really dissolve into the
primordial place of liberation (*gdod ma'i grol sa*) at the time of
final dissolution, but are present as inner clarity (*nang
gsal*). This kind of being present is termed “Swirling In Space”
(*dbyings su 'khyil ba*) and is the source of the arising of the
sambhogakāya (*longs sku*). At the time of its arising,
Peaceful and Wrathful Buddhas originate in the *Vajra*-Chains.
Not only that, it is at the same time that the Lamp of Utterly
Pure Space effectuates the Densely Arrayed Pure Realm
(*stug po bkod pa'i zhing khams*)³¹¹, that the Lamp of Empty
Drops of Light displays itself in the form of completely pure
visions of dimensionless palaces (*gzhal ye khang*), and that
the Lamp of Self-Arisen Discriminative Awareness manifests
visions of supreme knowledge and perfectly pure compassion.

Out of the *sambhogakāya* arises then the manifold

nirmaṇakāya (*sprul sku*) in order to benefit sentient beings.

Finally, - if there is no longer any need to render assistance to them by means of the Form-Body (*gzugs sku*) - the Four Lamps dwell again in the primordial continuum (*gdod ma'i ngang*) where they are spontaneously perfect as inner clarity, ever ready to manifest.